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The Cretan Rover; OR, Zuleikah, the Beautiful.

A Romance of the Crescent and the Cross.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARE-DEVIL," "THE FLYING
YANKEE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE HAUNTED RUIN.

There is a land amid a sable flood,
Called Crete; fair, fruitful,
Circled by the sea.

COWPER'S HOMER'S ODYSSEY.

SLOWLY the sun went down beyond the mossy summits of the White Mountains that tower heavenward from the bosom of the fair, fruitful, sea-encircled isle of Crete—a land still dotted with the monuments of those who lived

centuries ago; and whose deeds come down to us in legend and history—whose massive hills have shaken beneath the march of Roman soldiery, whose temples have echoed to the silver-tongued orators of classic Greece, and whose fair hills and valleys are now trodden in triumph by the haughty Turk, who has uprooted the cross of the Christian, and crowned every battlement with the crescent of the Infidel.

With rosy tint the setting sun fell upon a grand old ruin that stood upon a high hill overhanging the sea, and every crumbling column, every tottering arch stood out in bold relief against the golden sky, casting lengthened shadows far out over the sleeping waters of the Mediterranean, dotted by a single sail—a trim-looking craft—a league from the land, idly rocking upon the waves, and in the sunset light looking vividly like

"A painted ship
Upon a painted ocean."

Standing in the shadow of the ruin, and gazing wistfully out upon the waters, was a man of majestic, yet strange appearance.

His hair and beard were worn long and were iron-gray—his features bold, haughty, and tinged with sadness, while upon his face seemed to hover a look of constant suffering—whether mental or physical it was hard to tell.

He was attired in the national costume of Crete—jacket and leggings of blue velvet, embroidered with silk, and upon his head wore a red fez, while at his side hung a scimitar of rare finish.

For a long time he stood like a statue, his arms folded across his breast, his eyes fixed upon the distant sail, while the sun went down beyond the mountain range, and darkness crept slowly over land and sea.

Still he moved not, leaning against a broken column centuries old, his gaze still turned seaward, unmindful of the mournful sound of the sea fretting against the rocks, the wail of the rising wind, or the shriek of some night bird from its covert in the inland forest of orange-trees beyond the hill.

Presently a reddish glare stole over the scene of wave, rocky shore and wild ruin, and far off over the sea appeared the moon, arising from



THE MAIDEN STARTED, AND HALF RAISED HERSELF FROM HER RECLINING ATTITUDE.

its bed of waters, to keep vigil through the night, and flinging its silvery beams across the bosom of the Mediterranean, and penetrating the dark recesses of the massive, decaying temple.

Instantly the calm manner of the man changed—his eyes flashed fire, his features worked convulsively, while he stretched forth his trembling hand toward the moon as if in supplication.

Then his lips parted, and he said, in a tone of touching sadness:

"Yes, I am mad—mad to pray to the moon to bring her back to me; but why does the moon madden my brain like this—why does its silvery light set my brain on fire?"

"I love the moon, for it gilds the earth and sea with beauty—no! I hate the moon, for it witnessed the dread scene enacted here, here beneath this crumbling ruin, long years ago—ay, it looked down upon that bitter struggle—it saw me fall before the attack of him who had wronged me—it lighted his path, and hers, in their flight from me, and there was no pity in its gaze as it beheld me lying bleeding there."

"I have grown gray since then, and my face is tracked with age and suffering; but see, the moon is just the same as then—its smiling face is just as young, just as calm as then."

"Ah! curse the moon!—it drives me mad—ay, does it not, each month, launch forth upon the blue of heaven as a crescent, and is not the crescent the symbol of the hated Turk?"

"Ah! curse the moon—no, no, no, I must not curse what God hath made."

For a moment the form was bent, the eyes drooping downward, and the man seemed overwhelmed with woe; but suddenly he glanced up again, and his arms once more outstretched, while in ringing tones, that broke startlingly upon the deep silence, he called out:

"Ho! the moon! give me wings to fly over the earth, oh! thou glorious moon, that I may seek her—ay, and take her back to my heart—that I may find him and stain my scimitar with his life's blood."

"Ha! ha! ha! you will not grant my prayers—no, I see you smile calmly down upon my despair—you rejoice in the sorrows of thy slave, for I am thy slave—bound heart and brain in thy silvery fetters."

"They say she is still with him in a foreign land—they say she has forgotten her child, but they lie who tell me so—she will return, and the glorious moon will light her pathway over the sea—ha! see the moonlight falls upon yonder white sails—see! the vessel is coming in shore—aha! bright, glorious moon, you have guided her home—she comes! she comes!"

A glad light now swept over the sad, haggard face, and dropping upon his knees, his arms still pleadingly stretched before him, the man watched the coming vessel, which was standing rapidly shoreward.

"Whom seek you, old man?"

The voice, that suddenly broke the stillness, was cold and stern—the language that of the Turk.

It brought the madman quickly to his feet, and he beheld himself confronted by the form of one clad in the uniform of a Turkish officer.

With arms folded upon his broad breast, his tall form erect and motionless, his dark, handsome face calm and stern, the Turk gazed upon the man before him; thus the two stood for full a moment, the eyes of the Cretan glittering with a deadly light, his form trembling, like a reed shaken by the wind.

At length the Cretan hissed forth between his shut teeth:

"By the God of the Christian, Al Sirat! have you dared intrude here?"

"The sultan rules the land of Crete—Cretans are his slaves, El Estin—and his officers are hence at home here," haughtily replied the Turk.

"Curses on the sultan and his hirelings—ay, from my inmost heart I curse you, Al Sirat—you, who stole from me the jewel of my heart, the sunshine of my life."

"Yes, long years ago you did this foul wrong, and now you dare to come back to this very spot, where you left me struck down by your scimitar."

"But I'll forgive you, accursed infidel though you are, if you have brought her back to me—guilty though she be—speak! Al Sirat! do you come here to restore to me the one I love better than life—love, even though she turned from the cross to wear the crescent—speak! accursed Turk—I await your answer."

The milk-white teeth of the Turk glittered, as his lips parted, and upon his mouth beamed a cruel smile.

After a while he said, in cold, cutting tones:

"The charms of the once fair Alfarida have faded sadly, in the years that have gone by, since that night when she fled from your arms to mine—she is no longer the star of my harem, and I would gladly have her return to you, for inquiry has made known to me that you still love her; yet I ask a price for her, El Estin."

"Name your price, Turk, and you shall have it."

"It is to exchange Alfarida for thy beautiful daughter Kaloolah—"

With the shriek of a madman El Estin threw

himself upon the Turk, who by an exhibition of wonderful strength, hurled him back, and then stood on the defensive, with scimitar drawn.

With his own weapon presented, El Estin pressed rapidly forward to the attack, and the two gleaming blades crossed with a ringing sound that sent many an echo through the ruin.

"Dog of a Turk! I will have your life," hissed the Cretan, and he attacked Al Sirat with wondrous strength and skill, for one whose gray hair and beard would denote a man in the decline of life.

Then the Turk's cruel tones were heard:

"Fifteen years ago, El Estin, I left you for dead in this very ruin—this night your doom is sealed."

"Ay, you left me for dead, and you took from me her whom I loved better than life—you brought sorrow, dishonor, and suffering upon me, and made me an old man before my time—and for it, Al Sirat, you shall die, if I have strength and skill left in my arm to kill you," and the Cretan pressed his enemy with increased vigor.

But the Turk was a master of his weapon, and for a while acted wholly on the defensive, yet it would seem not from any feelings of mercy; but, after a while his manner changed, and he went to work with deadly intention, and steadily forced the Cretan back to the shelter of a marble arch.

Here El Estin stood at bay, and fierce indeed waged the combat; but with untiring energy the Turk pressed on, until, by a skillful movement, he struck down the blade of his foe, and thrust his own keen scimitar at the life of the Cretan.

With a half-cry of mingled pain and despair, the Cretan tottered forward, his scimitar falling from his nerveless grasp, and ringing clear and loud upon the stone pavement.

Then with outstretched arms toward the moon, he cried in tones of anguish:

"At last, by his hands I have met my death—and then, oh! cruel, smiling moon, thou hast witnessed the wicked triumph—ah—curses! Al Sirat—curses—Alfarida—I—Kaloolah—"

With a heavy thud the wounded man fell to the earth, where he lay all limp and motionless.

With stern brow and triumphant smile, the Turk stood gazing down upon him—stood, as if in joyous reverie over his deed—then he started suddenly, for he seemed to feel rather than discover another presence near him.

A shadow swept before him, and his eyes almost started from their sockets, his darkly-bronzed face became livid, and he seemed almost bereft of the power to move.

Before him, and standing in the ruined archway, half in shadow, half in moonlight, was a weird-looking form—a woman, clad in a loose, flowing mantle of snow-white.

Adown her back, and upon her shoulders, hung masses of inky hair, while one arm was stretched out, the finger pointing directly toward the heart of the Turk.

"Accursed Turk—go!"

The voice was deep, almost sepulchral in its tone; but it had a determined ring that at once caused the Turk to obey.

With a cry of commingled fear and horror, he turned and fled swiftly from the scene, fully convinced that he had been warned away from the ruin by a spirit from the grave.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUICIDE.

CONSTANTINOPLE, the metropolis of the land of the Turk, the link that binds Europe with the past of centuries ago, lay in deep repose, for the hour was late, and all good Mahomedans had sought rest.

Without, the night was unusually severe, and a rain-storm skurried along the deserted streets, the winds howled along the house-tops, and whistled mournfully through the rigging of the numerous vessels lying at anchor in the Bosphorus and Golden Horn, whose waters were lashed into foam-capped waves.

The hum of busy life had died away, the rumble of wheels had ceased, and only the Turkish guard patrolled the lonely thoroughfares, or shrank, shivering and miserable, into some friendly shelter under the lee of a house.

Yet there was one wayfarer, indifferently facing the storm, and breathing the icy breath of the gale, as he strode slowly down a deserted street, his shadow, cast by the flickering lamps, dancing about like some giant demon of the darkness.

He was strangely clad for that oriental city of the Turk, for his head was covered by no fez, his form was guiltless of the costume of the East, but instead, he wore the attire of a European.

With no cloak about his shoulders, his slouch hat dripping wet, and the fierce rain pelting him unmercifully and saturating his clothing, he presented a pitiable sight indeed, as he wandered listlessly along, as though not knowing, or caring, whither he went.

At length the wind swept more fiercely in his face, and he shrank visibly from its contact, while he glanced nervously around him.

"Is this chance—or has my destiny led me here to die?" he muttered, in pure English, as his eyes swept over the scene.

He had reached the shores of the Bosphorus, and was standing where the force of the gale chilled him to the heart.

For some moments he stood in gloomy silence, and then again his lips parted in low mutterings:

"Yes, it seems as though I must end my own life; I am almost starved now, and this wind is freezing my very heart."

"Better die at once than linger on here in agony for a day, or night, longer—no, no, no—I could not endure another night like this—I am almost dead now—my will, not my strength, keeps me up."

"Yes, I will end my life here, here in these dark waters, and may a just God, who knows my anguish, forgive me the deed. He will pity me."

"Found dead!—a man supposed to be an American, but name unknown—will be all that will be said of me."

"My God! that I should have come to this—I, who was raised in luxury; who once had fond parents and loving sisters to care for me—I, who once won a name in my own land as a gallant soldier—to die thus, a vagabond in a foreign land—to die by my own act, is terrible—to die here in this infidel land of the Turk—a sad ending to a life once bright and joyous."

"But I must not shrink now—there is no hope for me—here must be my grave."

As the unhappy man spoke, he gazed unshrinkingly down into the dark waters of the Bosphorus, and said, in a voice that did not quiver:

"God in heaven! forgive my act—ha! what sound is that?"

"Hark! the noise of combat—"

With lightning speed the man bounded away in the direction from whence came the sounds that had so opportunely prevented his self-destruction—an instant later and the sound would have fallen upon ears forever dulled by death."

A short run brought him upon a scene of excitement. A man, in a heavy cloak, stood against a wall, and with drawn scimitar was defending himself from the attack of four burly Turks, who were pressing him hard.

At his feet lay the motionless form of one of his assailants; but those who remained were evidently seeking his life, for one of them was just raising a long pistol to shoot him down, when the weapon was suddenly snatched from his hand, and fell with a heavy blow upon his head crushing in the skull.

It was the intended suicide who had dealt the blow, and having come to the rescue he bounded into the midst of the *melee*, whirling in his hand the blade of the man he had slain.

Striking up the weapons of the Turks, with a skill that proved himself a master at fence, he confronted them with bold mien and determined daring.

But, discomfited by the fall of two of their number, the Turks seemed in no mood to continue the struggle, and at once beat a hasty retreat around the nearest corner.

"You have done me good service, sir, and I would not have you suffer on my account—so follow me," said the rescued man, grasping the hand of his preserver, and drawing him quickly away from the scene.

"Why should we fly—I but aided you against a band of cutthroats?" coolly replied the young man, speaking in French, the language in which he had been addressed.

"You mistake—these men whom we have slain are secret soldiers of the sultan—they attacked me for a purpose I cannot explain—come, the alarm is given, and we must away would we save our lives."

Without awaiting a reply the man again drew his preserver onward, hurrying along in the direction of the water.

Halting at the shore he gave a low whistle, and immediately after, out of the dark waters, was visible an approaching boat, in which were the forms of half a dozen men.

"Enter, sir—quick, please," said the stranger, as the boat touched the shore, and the sounds of pursuit were heard behind them.

Involuntarily the young man sprang into the boat—his companion followed quickly, and a low word of command sent the little craft flying away over the dark waters.

"Pull with a will, men; I have left that behind me which would cost me my life were I taken."

The young man glanced quickly up—his strange companion had addressed his men in the Greek tongue—then he observed how silently the boat sped over the waters—the oars were muffled—evidently there was some mystery at the bottom of all this.

Yet he felt indifferent to consequences—his intention to end his life had merely been postponed—the scene in which he had been engaged was almost forgotten in his own gloomy thoughts.

Who or what was his strange companion he cared little—he was just then drifting with the

tide of circumstances which must eventually bear him back to misery.

Seeing that his companion shrunk from the cold blast that swept over the water, the commander of the boat drew from the locker a heavy robe and threw it around him, saying, kindly:

"This is a bitter night to be out without heavy clothing—you should have worn your cloak."

"All that I possess in the world I have on my back."

The grim tone of the young man struck his companion strangely, and he glanced searchingly into his face, while he said:

"Then life has been unkind to you, it would seem? But here we are, and by force of circumstances, I must make you my guest."

As he spoke the boat ran under the lee of a large schooner, lying at anchor, but restlessly tugging at the cable, as though anxious to be free.

"Come—I will soon make you comfortable," and taking the arm of the young man, the stranger led him on board the vessel, and down into the brightly-lighted cabin, where the rays of the swinging lamp fell upon the faces of both.

Each man at once glanced quickly into the face of the other—and each was struck with what he there saw.

The one was a man of splendid physique, graceful in carriage, and attired in a threadbare suit of clothes.

His face was pale, haggard, yet strangely handsome, and one who had seen much of the world, and meeting him in any land, would at once have pronounced him an American—a man who had seen better days in the bygone.

Though shrunk up with cold, dripping wet, and poverty-clad, he was every inch the gentleman, while his dark eyes, though sunken, were full of fire, and his face noble, though pinched with suffering, which caused him to look thirty-five, when his age was really ten years younger.

The other was a man with darkly-brown face, dark hair and beard, both worn long, and a form of medium size, yet denoting strength and activity of no common order.

He had a bold, determined look, his eyes were black and ever restless, and his movements quick and decided.

Throwing aside his cloak the act displayed his Greek attire, while at his belt hung a glittering scimitar.

Having quickly scanned the face of his companion, he raised the fez cap from his head, and then threw aside a wig and a false beard, the act leaving his face shaded by only a long mustache and short brown curls clustering about his temples.

"You see I trust you, sir," he said, in pleasant tones, and then he continued:

"You are welcome on board my vessel—which but for you would now be without a commander."

"What circumstances caused you to be alone and friendless in this land of the Turk I will not inquire into; you saved my life, and I am now ready to aid you."

The young man made no reply, and his companion continued:

"If I mistake not you are an American, and, as such, can hold no sympathy with the Infidel Turk—you have yourself confessed to your poverty, so pardon me if I say that I can make you an offer of lucrative employment—that is, if you are willing to join me in an enterprise of desperate danger."

"In what service, captain?"

"In one of honor, I pledge you my word. Are you afraid to risk your life?"

"No—when I went to your rescue I was going—"

"Where?"

"To death."

"Good God! do you mean what you say?" cried the seaman, impressed by the manner of the other.

"Yes—you saved my life—for, to aid you, I turned away from my intention to end my misery in the dark waters of the Bosphorus."

"I will not ask you what has brought you to this—I feel that it was not by dishonor; thank God we met as we did," and the seaman extended his hand, while he spoke in perfect English, and continued:

"I need just such a man as you to aid me—will you go with me?"

"Whither?"

"Does a man who was going to take his own life fear to follow where another man dare lead?"

"No—I will go; but why, if your employment is one of honor, do I find you in disguise, and at war with the soldiers of the sultan?"

"Because I am a hunted man—because I have drawn my sword in defense of the cross against the crescent of the Turk—because I would see the fair isle of Crete free from the rule of the sultan."

"You have said enough—I am with you heart and hand—poor Crete has all of my sympathy in its present struggle."

"Circumstances over which I held no control

made me a wanderer in a foreign land, and despair nearly drove me to my death."

The Cretan held forth his hand, which the American warmly grasped, and thus was sealed a friendship between those two so strangely met—the one in the service of a once mighty people, and whose greatness lay buried beneath the ruined temples of their forefathers—the other a son of a new nation, another world, as it were, whose bark of state, launched but a century ago, was to sail over the same stormy seas that had wrecked Rome, Greece and the other mighty governments of antiquity.

CHAPTER III.

THE EXILE'S STORY.

WITH the morning sun the storm died away, and the Bosphorus was no longer swept into restless motion by the chafing wind that had skurried across the waters during the hours of darkness.

From the town, as the sunlight gilded the domes, minarets and pinnacles of the oriental city of Constantinople, came the hum of busy life, for the world of Mohammedanism was awake once more to the cares and pleasures of the day.

No longer tugging restlessly at her anchors, the schooner, which had so strangely become the haven of refuge to the intended suicide of the night before, lay calmly upon the clear waters, her sails closely furled, her crew silently moving about the decks, and all presenting a scene of complete repose.

Yet there was something ominous, almost, in the quietude on board the vessel, which by the light of day proved to be a large yacht apparently built for both speed and sea-going qualities.

Her hull was exceedingly long, lean and crouched low in the water amidships, while both the stern and bow were considerably elevated.

Excepting two bands or belts of blue and white, running around the bulwarks, the hull was painted jet black, while in strange contrast, the masts and spars were snow-white.

The masts were slender, very tall, and raked saucily, while a needle-like bowsprit projected far out over the waters, sheltering the figure-head—a muscular arm, painted blood-red, and grasping a silver scimitar.

That the yacht was not wholly for pleasure, was evident, as her decks were armed with a battery of seven steel guns of the most approved pattern, and her masts were encircled by racks, containing boarding-pikes, cutlasses, and muskets.

Over all there rested an air of perfect neatness and discipline, while the score of her crew visible were dressed in uniform of blue, trimmed with white.

At the fore-top floated the red flag of the Turk, with its white star and crescent, and at the peak fluttered the ensign of Great Britain, proving that the beautiful vessel was either an English cruiser or an armed pleasure yacht, whose master's wanderings carried him into dangerous waters, where it was well to be prepared for self-protection.

Within the spacious, and luxuriously-furnished cabin, sat two persons at breakfast—the two men already introduced to the reader, and destined to play no small part in the scenes of this romance.

The master of the vessel was attired in a handsome uniform of dark blue cloth trimmed with silver lace, while his sash of woven silk, scimitar, and naval cap, lay upon a divan near by.

His companion was pale, calm-looking, and quiet, but the haggard, despairing look had vanished from his face, and he seemed no longer hopeless.

He was attired in a uniform similar to the one worn by the seaman, though not so elaborately trimmed with silver lace, and in spite of his wan face, was an exceedingly handsome, striking looking man.

The two had become well acquainted, it would seem, for an easy confidence existed between them, which the seaman furthermore increased by saying, when the meal was finished:

"Now, Mr. Malvern, I will tell you who and what I am—and in so doing I place my life in the hands of a man whom I have not yet known twenty-four hours."

"I appreciate your confidence, Captain Delos—one of these days I will tell you of myself; but not now," calmly answered Paul Malvern, as he lighted a cigar, handed him by his companion, and threw himself into an easy seat.

Julian Delos slowly applied the match to his cigar, drew a few puffs of smoke therefrom, and then tossed it from him, while he paced the cabin thoughtfully for a moment.

Then he took a seat near the American and said, in his deep, musical tones:

"Mr. Malvern, the noble conduct of England's greatest poet, Byron, in casting his fortunes with the Greeks, inspired my father, an English nobleman, to seek that classic land, and offer his sword against the Turk."

"Of his numerous adventures I will not speak,

except to say that he was taken prisoner, and would have died by the bow-string, had he not been rescued by a Cretan girl—one whom he had often met and learned to love.

"That maiden afterward became my mother, for my father married her, and together they returned to England, after more than a year's hiding from the Turks in the mountains of Crete."

"It was while thus in concealment that I was born, and shortly afterward my parents escaped from the island in an open boat, and were picked up at sea by an American cruiser and carried to Liverpool."

"But years after another revolution against Turkish tyranny broke out in Crete, and once more my parents returned to the island, my father to offer his sword again to the brave patriots."

"Alas! it proved his death—he was captured and executed, and once more my mother was a fugitive with myself, a mere boy; yet, boy though I was, the sultan pronounced the sentence of death against me and against my mother, should we ever again enter the Turkish territory."

"My father's title and estates descended to me, and perhaps I should have been content to have lived in England; but there seemed born in me a demon of unrest, and daily witnessing the brooding sorrow of my poor mother, I grew up longing for revenge against the slayers of my father."

"At the same time my mother instilled into my heart an undying love for my native land—the fair isle of Crete, and as I grew in years I longed to strike a blow for its freedom."

"Ere I was of age my mother sunk to her last rest, and found a grave in English soil; but with her dying breath she made me promise to one day aid my native land."

"The death of my mother, who had been all in all to me, made me more restless and lonely, and building a yacht, and receiving permission from the Queen to arm her, as I expected to cruise in all parts of the world, I left England, and for years I went from land to land, until every sea has known the sharp keel of my vessel."

"Being in your own land, when the civil war broke out, I drew my sword in defense of the South, and fought until the conquered banner went down in gloom; but this war experience made me long to revel again in battle, and against the hated Turk, and I at once sailed for Greece."

"Under my mother's maiden name, Delos, I visited once more the isle of Crete, and then boldly dropped anchor in the Bosphorus."

"To my joy I found that my countrymen were then trembling on the verge of revolution, and making myself known to them, I was received into their councils. The result is that I am now here in Constantinople, loading my vessel with arms, ammunition, and supplies for the Cretans, who, as you know, have boldly raised the cross against the crescent."

"Yes; and they are making a bold stand of it. But can I ask, Captain Delos, why you come to Constantinople for arms—this, the head and center of your foes?"

The Cretan smiled grimly, and then said:

"The bolder an act, the more certain its success. Were I to arm my vessel in foreign ports, it would cause me to be hunted down by the cruisers of the countries whose laws I broke; with Turkey I am already at war—by Turkey I am already sentenced to death, and hence I came hither, for we have good friends here, even under the shadow of the Sublime Porte."

"And so true have been my friends that my vessel is now fully loaded with all the arms and supplies we can carry."

"And you have done this beneath the very eyes of the Turk, and not been suspected?" asked Paul Malvern, with admiring surprise.

"Yes; yet I feel confident that I was suspected to-day—not suspected as the owner of this craft, but suspected as the exiled Cretan, for I was watched, and, as you know, to-night was attacked. Had it not been for you, I fear I would now be sleeping in the Bosphorus."

"Then I should have thought that you would have set sail last night."

"Yes, it would have been best, I admit; but I have a motive for remaining. It was that motive that urged me the more in coming to the Sublime Porte for my arms."

"And that is—"

"I will tell you. My mother, when she married my father, had a young and beautiful sister, who, when she grew to womanhood, married a wealthy merchant of Crete."

"Her husband having been a revolutionist, was one of the first to fall in the present struggle, while his wife fell beneath the scimitar of a cruel Turk."

"They had two children, a son of twenty, who it is feared shared the same fate as his father, and a daughter of seventeen, who was taken by the Turkish officer in command and sent to his harem here on the banks of the Bosphorus—"

"Did a Turkish officer dare to perpetrate such an outrage?" asked Paul Malvern, indignantly.

"Of course—Turkish officers will dare do anything, I have found out."

"Well, that officer is now in Crete, and a leader there, for he is a pasha,* and my beautiful cousin, whom I visited at her home, a year ago, is now in his harem on the west bank of the Bosphorus."

"I know the spot well, for I have reconnoitered it, and I am now determined to rescue Zuleikah from the cruel fate for which the Turk intends her, and in that rescue I expect your aid."

"And you shall have it; I am with you, heart and hand."

"Thank you, my friend; I know that you will prove a tower of strength on my side; but let me say that, if we can gain the ear of one person in the harem, our duty will be light."

"Who is this person?"

"She is now a woman advanced in years; once she was the fairest daughter of the isle of Crete, but that was years ago."

"She married a Cretan, a man of family and wealth, and the result of their union was a daughter."

"But the beauty of the young mother attracted the attention of a Turkish noble, a young and handsome officer, who won her love from her husband, and urged her to fly with him."

"The guilty lovers were surprised in their trysting-place by the indignant husband, and a combat followed, wherein the Cretan was struck down and left for dead by the Turk."

"Then the lovers fled, and the beautiful Alfarida became the inmate of a harem, the favorite of the cruel Turk, for whose love she had fled from her home."

"But the Cretan did not die; he recovered, and devoted himself to his little daughter; yet, strange to say, taught her to revere the memory of her mother, whom he never ceased to love."

"Nay, more: he loves her to this day, and a slave, one who waited in the Turk's harem, having visited our island, and reported that Alfarida was tired of life, and wished to return to her home, her husband has longed to have her do so."

"Years have passed since the Ethiopian slave told the poor husband of the wish of his faithless wife, and daily the mourning man hopes for her return."

"This man, El Estin by name, is one of our prominent leaders, though secretly, and I feel that if Alfarida returned to him, he would devote his whole energy in the cause of Crete, and therefore I am anxious to have her do so."

"Now she and my cousin Zuleikah are in the same harem, and I determined to rescue both of them. It is a dangerous game to play, here on the banks of the Golden Horn, but I feel that we will be successful."

"We will at least make the attempt, Captain Delos—"

"Yes—and this very night."

CHAPTER IV.

A BOLD VENTURE.

THE night broke in unclouded splendor upon land and water, mirroring the stars, the trees, the vessels, and the minarets and pinnacles of Constantinople in the unclouded depths of the strait which stretched majestically away between the two shores toward the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmora.

Upon the banks of a peninsula, formed by a small creek flowing into the crystal waters of the Bosphorus, stood a large kiosk—the villa of some wealthy noble.

Around it were gardens of rare beauty, and wafted out over the waters was a breeze laden with the perfumes of a thousand flowers.

Shrubs, orange-trees, and numerous other flower-bearing bushes lined the walks, while the falling of waters, thrown into the air by fountains, broke pleasantly upon the ear, for though the night was cool it was not unpleasantly so.

The kiosk was a large, rambling structure, built wholly in the pinnacled, oriental style of architecture, and, half surrounded as it was by water, seemed a secluded retreat in which one could dream away the hours of life.

Presently over the limpid waters of the Bosphorus glided a large *caïque*, containing two cloaked forms beside the four oarsmen.

With rapid stroke it advanced toward the shore, down to which sloped the beautiful garden, and was then allowed to drift slowly in against the hedge that bordered the grounds.

"Come, signor; we will land. Taras, seize and hold anyone who approaches the boat," and so saying the speaker sprang ashore, followed immediately by a tall form.

The two were Captain Julian Delos and Paul Malvern, and they had boldly invaded the grounds that surrounded the kiosk of Al Sirat Pasha.

A walk of a few moments brought them to an orange bower, almost under the shadows of the harem walls, and here they halted.

In silence they waited for full an hour, and then a man came around the corner of the kiosk,

and turned his steps in the direction of the water-stairs.

In the starlight brightness the two men in waiting recognized him as an Ethiopian slave, clad in his garment of white.

He was huge in stature, slow in movement, and his face of inky blackness.

In his sash he wore a pistol, and to a chain hung a bared scimitar, while a jeweled crescent glittered in his turban.

"That fellow is evidently a head servant—some trusted villain of Al Sirat: but if he were the pasha himself we must take him; come," and, as Captain Delos thus whispered, he left the arbor and crept noiselessly on after the slave, who directed his steps to the water's edge, where against the stone stairway were moored half a dozen *caïques* of various sizes.

As if expecting some one at the landing, who had not come, he stood silently gazing out over the starlit waters at the brilliant lights of Istanbul* in the distance.

Wrapped in deep reverie he failed to observe the two dark forms stealing upon him from the shadow of the orange hedge.

Nearer and nearer they crept, until, with a bound, they were upon him, and a heavy blow sent him reeling to the ground.

Ere he could recover himself, or cry out, his pistol and scimitar were in the hands of his captors, and a jeweled dirk was held above his heart.

"Utter a cry for aid and you shall die; be calm, and answer my questions, and I will show mercy, slave," said Captain Delos, speaking in the Turkish tongue.

"What would you—and who are you, that dare thus seize upon the head servant of his lordship, Al Sirat Pasha?" returned the Ethiopian, gruffly, though still lying passively upon the ground.

"That you shall soon know. Arise and come with me," sternly replied the Cretan.

The slave silently and morosely obeyed, while his small black eyes glanced nervously around, perhaps with a view to seize upon some plan of escape.

A walk of a hundred yards brought them to the shrub-embankment avenue, at the foot of which awaited the boat.

"Well, Taras, you are on the alert, I see," said Julian Delos, as the coxswain of the *caïque* arose suddenly and confronted them.

"Now, slave," continued the Cretan, "I will bind you securely, and then your life depends upon how well you serve me. Bind him hand and foot, Taras."

The seaman quickly obeyed, and then the huge Ethiopian was placed in the boat.

"Now, Taras, you and your comrades go ashore and keep a bright look-out."

The seamen obeyed, and Julian Delos and Paul Malvern were alone with the captive.

"Slave—if you answer my questions faithfully, and aid me all in your power, I will this night make you a free man, and bear you with me far from this land of the Turk, while you shall have gold in plenty; but if you deceive me, and send me into a trap, I swear to you, by Allah and the Prophet's head, that the Bosphorus shall receive you."

"In yonder harem are two persons whom I wish to take from it—will you aid me?"

"And thus prove false to my master's trust?" sullenly replied the slave.

"If you love your master more than you do life and gold, so be it," sternly replied the Cretan.

"What would you have me do?"

"Who guards the harem of his lordship, Al Sirat?"

"I am chief slave of the household."

"It is well. Tell me how I can get into the harem?"

"I will conduct you there—"

"You will do no such thing; you will tell me how to enter the harem, and remain here under the guard of my men. If anything befalls me they will have my orders to take your life; now you know the alternative; direct me wrong and you die—serve me well, and freedom and gold is yours: which will you choose?"

"Life and gold and freedom. What would you know?"

"Has Al Sirat Pasha a favorite in his harem, whose name is Alfarida?"

"She was a Cretan! No, she is not there."

"Whither has she gone?"

"Ask the Bosphorus."

"What! is she dead?"

"Yes."

"Did she die a natural death, or by the order of Al Sirat?"

"Few women die natural deaths in this land. She died as many others have before her."

"By the bow-string?"

"Yes."

"And by the order of Al Sirat?"

"Who else would have power to order her death—unless it was the sultan, whom Allah preserve many years?"

"Was she faithless to Al Sirat?"

"Yes; her beauty failed her, and that was being faithless in his lordship's eyes. Anyhow,

she sailed out one night on the Bosphorus and never returned."

"You were her executioner, then?"

"I obeyed the commands of my master," sullenly replied the slave.

"So be it; she were better dead than a faded beauty in a harem. There is one other I would ask you of: has Al Sirat a maiden, also a Cretan, in his harem?"

"A Turk has many maidens in his harem, if so it be his humor."

"You evade my question: is there a maiden there, a Cretan, by the name of Zuleikah?"

"One who was brought there only a short while since?"

"Yes."

"Zuleikah is there. She is very beautiful. When his lordship returns from the war she will doubtless become the favorite of the harem."

"Never! slave; it is that girl you must aid me to rescue."

"It might cost me my life if I did."

"It certainly shall cost you your life if you do not."

The Ethiopian groaned, and then remained silent for a moment.

Then he said:

"What would you, signor?" and in his tone there was a show of respect.

"Tell me how to gain audience with the maiden, and I will do for you all that I have promised."

Again the slave was silent for some moments, and then he said, in his deep, slow tones:

"The slightest mistake would cost you your life. You know how jealously a Turk guards his harem?"

"Yes, I know all—I will risk it; tell me how to gain an entrance to the harem?"

"I could guide—"

"Hush! I will not trust you; be quick!"

"Go to the left wing—this walk will lead you to it—knock thrice on a window, half-hidden in the leaves of a myrtle tree; a woman, a negress, will answer you; tell her you come from me—"

"Your name—"

"Mesrak!"

"Proceed!"

"Tell her you came from me—that I have sold a beauty from his lordship's harem—give her gold in plenty, and she will conduct you to the chamber of the Lady Zuleikah."

"Suppose she refuse?"

"If you are generous with your gold, she will not refuse."

"Very well. Taras!"

"Ay, ay, signor," and the coxswain approached.

"Guard this slave well; on your life be it, that he escape not. If I do not return by midnight, or the Signor Malvern comes not back, put your dirk in the heart of this slave and throw him into the Bosphorus."

"If harm befall me, remember, I leave the Signor Malvern in possession and command of my vessel; you will obey him."

The Greek seaman bowed in reply, and again repeating his threat to the slave, the Cretan sprang ashore, followed by Paul Malvern.

A moment after they disappeared in the gloom of the orange-bordered avenue, bound upon the perilous duty of rescuing a young girl from the well-guarded harem of Al Sirat, the Turkish general.

CHAPTER V.

ZULEIKAH.

THREADING their way through the orange-embowered avenue, leading from the water to the kiosk, Julian Delos and Paul Malvern slowly and cautiously approached the wing of the building designated by the Ethiopian.

A short search discovered the window, sheltered by foliage, and upon this the Cretan tapped three times as directed.

A few moments of suspense followed, and then a slide in the window was drawn aside, and a disagreeable voice asked, in the Turkish tongue:

"Who signals?"

"Friends—we come from Mesrak, the Ethiopian—we would converse with you," said the Cretan, in a whisper.

"Wait."

The slide was again closed, and a moment after they beheld a small, dark form standing by their side. So noiseless had been her approach that the two young men were momentarily startled by her sudden appearance.

"I am here—what would you?" asked the woman, whose black face was plainly visible in the starlight, and appeared strangely ugly and cunning.

But she was richly dressed, and was evidently a trusted servant of Al Sirat Pasha.

"Here, place this purse in your belt, and it may improve your bearing and oil your tongue. You are Eldrene, are you not?"

"Yes; my lord is generous with his gold. What would he have me do?"

"Answer a few questions, first—where is she who was once the favorite of Al Sirat's harem?"

* Equal to the rank of general.—THE AUTHOR.

* Constantinople.

"Al Sirat Pasha has had many favorites."

"True; I refer to Alfarida, of Crete?"

"Go ask the grave; she has been gone for years."

"Then Mesrak spoke the truth. Now, tell me, where is Lady Zuleikah?"

The woman started and gazed searchingly into the face of the questioner; then she turned an earnest look upon Paul Malvern.

"What know you of the Lady Zuleikah?" she asked, after awhile.

"I know she is in the walls of this harem; she is my kindred; I would see her."

"To all who speak the language of the Turk it were useless to explain how inviolate is the sanctity of the harem."

"Yes; but gold keys will sometimes unlock portals which iron keys fail to do. Mesrak sent us to you; I have given you a purse heavy with gold. See, here is its equal if you lead me to the presence of the Lady Zuleikah."

The woman was silent for a moment and then said, slowly:

"What use will the gold serve me if my life be the forfeit?"

"None; but your life will not be the forfeit. I will double my offer to you."

"Come; I will take the risk. Ha! who is that?"

The woman sprang back in terror into the shadows of the building, as a form advanced suddenly from the shrubbery.

"Signor, it is Taras," and the coxswain came forward.

"Well, what is it?" asked the Cretan.

"The signal of recall is hoisted on board the yacht, signor."

"This is too bad—just on the eve of success! What can it mean?"

"Suppose you go and see—I will go with Eldrene, here, and effect the release of the fair Zuleikah."

"Good! Signor Malvern, I will go at once on board, and return for you to the same place where my caique lies; by this we will save time."

A few whispered words between the two, and Captain Delos and Taras disappeared in the gloom, while Paul Malvern turned again to the cowering negress.

"I am ready to follow you now," he said, in fair Turkish.

The woman hesitated, and, seeing it, the American held up before her a bag of gold.

"See, I have your reward."

The eyes of the negress glittered avariciously, while she said:

"You risk your life—I warn you."

"I fear not to die, woman; lead on."

The woman turned, and, pushing aside the shrubbery, entered a narrow doorway in the wall, which led into a narrow hall, dimly lighted by an iron lamp swung from the ceiling.

With noiseless tread the two traversed the full length of the passageway, and then the woman halted before a heavy curtain that concealed a door.

"Stand beneath the folds of this drapery. If any one comes do not move; I will return soon."

So saying, Eldrene left Paul Malvern securely hidden, and entered a door beneath the curtain.

A flood of light burst forth, but only for an instant, and then the young adventurer found himself again in the dim obscurity.

As he waited in breathless silence he could almost hear the beating of his own heart; not that he feared for himself; but a dread was upon him that he might not succeed in his bold venture.

A few moments passed—an age it seemed to him—and then the light again streamed forth from the open door, and Paul turned to greet the negress.

Quickly the door closed; but in the instant of light Paul Malvern beheld that it was not the negress who stood before him; on the contrary, it was a tall, brawny, Ethiopian slave.

Each man stood beneath the folds of the curtain, glaring at each other in the dim light, and then the slave sprang nimbly back, freeing himself from the curtain, and attempting to draw his scimitar.

But Paul Malvern was now thoroughly alive to his peril, and with his drawn scimitar in hand sprang upon the Ethiopian with the activity of a panther springing upon his prey.

There was a clash of steel, a dull thud, a scraping sound of steel meeting bone, a heavy fall, a deep groan, a dragging up of the limbs, and the Ethiopian's days on earth had ended.

Hastily dragging the body against the wall, Paul concealed it beneath the trailing folds of the heavy curtain, and again took his stand, just as the door opened, and Eldrene stood before him.

"Come!"

It was all she said, and, obeying, the young man stepped into the brightly-lighted room.

"The slave did not see you. I feared all was lost when he passed through. He is the night guard," said Eldrene, and terror was yet visible upon her face.

"He said nothing to me," evasively replied Paul, and he glanced around him, and discov-

ered that he was in what appeared to be a large anteroom, brightly lighted by a swinging silver lamp, filled with scented oil, that caused a pleasant fragrance through the chamber.

"Beneath yonder curtain is a door; it leads into the chamber of the Lady Zuleikah. Be careful not to startle her, and cause her to cry out. Give me my gold; I have done my part of the agreement."

"But you will remain to guide me hence?"

"No; you know the way. Give me my gold."

Paul Malvern hesitated, for he knew not but that, after all, the negress might prove a traitress.

After a few seconds of thought, he said:

"Eldrene, are you aware where Mesrak is?"

"He is in no danger, is he?" queried the woman, in sudden fright.

"Is he aught to you?"

"He is all to me; he is my son," she cried, earnestly.

"Well, he is in no danger if I return safe to my companions; but if harm befall me, he will lose his life."

Whether the negress had intended treachery before, it were hard to tell; but certain it is that all thought of it fled from her mind at the danger of her son, and she replied:

"I will await you here and guide you out; go."

Without hesitation Paul Malvern drew aside the velvet hangings and opened the door.

Before it hung, upon the other side, a velvet curtain, fringed with gold, and worked in silver thread.

Through the folds of velvet, after closing the door behind him, he gazed into the room.

It was a chamber of large size, carpeted with mossy matting, and furnished with an oriental luxuriousness that was most inviting.

Through the chamber floated a balmy atmosphere most delightful to the olfactories, and upon all rested a dreamy voluptuousness that made the senses languid, and invited repose.

Upon a mass of silken and velvet cushions, in one corner of the room, half-reclined a female form—that of a young girl who seemed scarcely more than sixteen years of age.

Her recumbent position displayed her faultless form to perfection, for she was attired richly in silken trousers, clasped with gold buckles above the ankles, while the caftan of dark velvet added to the beauty of her complexion.

Her face was pale, nay, white as snow, in its purity, and every feature formed in a perfect mold, while her eyes were large, dark, and dreamy to sadness.

Her lips, slightly parted, displayed perfect teeth, and her hair, amber in hue, hung in luxuriant masses all around her.

Upon her arms were heavy bracelets of gold, studded with gems, and upon her feet were sandals loosely laced.

A more bewitching vision of beauty never before burst upon the gaze of mortal man, and Paul Malvern almost believed himself in a dream.

Could this enchanting scene, this fragrant air, this luxury, and this angelic being be real? he thought.

For some moments he stood in silent admiration, unable to move or speak.

Then there gradually stole over him a remembrance of his peril and his mission, and he called, in the language of the Turk:

"Lady Zuleikah!"

The maiden started, and half-raised herself from her reclining attitude.

"Lady Zuleikah!"

"Who calls my name?" she asked, in tones strangely flute-like.

"One who has come to serve you—one unknown to you, but who is the friend of Julian Delos."

In an instant the maiden was upon her feet, and turning aside the heavy folds of the curtain, Paul Malvern stood beside her.

At suddenly beholding a man before her—a stranger, and evidently one who was neither Greek or Turk—Zuleikah started back with a half cry of alarm. As she did so, old Eldrene burst into the room, while there broke from her lips three words:

"We are lost!"

CHAPTER VI.

ROBBING A HAREM.

THE intrepidity of Paul Malvern's character at once displayed itself at the sudden appearance of the negress, who had burst into the room with the startling cry upon her lips.

Zuleikah, wholly unnerved, sunk back upon the luxurious couch of cushions; but Paul at once placed himself in front of her, his drawn scimitar in one hand, a revolver in the other.

"What is the danger, woman?" he asked, calmly.

"Poor Balzac has been slain. We are discovered, and guards are now lying in wait to seize you as you go out. They doubtless thought that Balzac let you in."

"By Balzac do you mean he whom you told me was the night-guard?" asked Paul.

"Yes. He lies in his blood in the hall-way!"

"Have no fear, if that is the cause of your alarm. He discovered me beneath the curtain, attempted to attack me, and I killed him."

Zuleikah shuddered, while old Eldrene said, with anger:

"And what will be thought when he is found?"

"That he died like a good sentinel upon his post. I have heard that wealthy Turks keep their golden treasures hidden in their harems; doubtless your master does the same, and it will be thought that Balzac was attacked by those who would rob the pasha of his treasure. He certainly met his death at the hands of one who shall rob his harem of its brightest jewel."

"What mean you?" asked the old negress.

"Simply that the Lady Zuleikah was stolen from her home by your cruel master, and that I have come to take her back to her friends."

"Oh, God! if you will do this, upon my bended knees will I thank you, signor," and the beautiful maiden threw herself down before Paul, who quickly raised her, and turned upon the negress, who had drawn a jeweled dagger, and with blazing eyes was advancing upon him.

"Back, woman!" and one wave of the scimitar struck the gleaming dirk from the woman's hand.

"One cry, one move on your part, and I will kill you as I did Balzac. I will not be thwarted now," and Paul Malvern's eyes flashed fire.

The negress shrunk back, her hand benumbed by the blow; but she said, savagely:

"You did not say that you wished to rob the harem of the Lady Zuleikah; you only wished to see her."

"Did you believe me a fool to leave her here to become the toy of a cruel Turk? Hold! you will remain here. If you attempt to leave this room I will end your days, woman though you be; and have you forgotten that if harm befalls me your son's moments on earth are numbered?"

A look of piteous entreaty came over the black face, and sinking upon her knees she elevated her hands, her lips moving, yet uttering no word. The thought of her son's danger had conquered her.

"Lady, I left your kinsman, Julian, only a few moments since. He was coming to rescue you himself, but was unexpectedly called away, and I have come to save you in his stead; will you trust yourself to me?"

"I am an American, whose life your kinsman saved, and I am now enlisted under the same banner as himself. Will you trust yourself with me, fair lady?"

The tears rushed into the eyes of Zuleikah, and, with her face radiant with joy, she cried:

"Go with you? Yes, to the ends of the earth, if you will only take me from this place."

Paul's heart bounded—he felt that he was in dangerous company for his own peace of mind, and said, quickly:

"Throw around your shoulders some mantle, lady, and make what preparations you desire."

Zuleikah at once set to work, and, though scowled upon by Eldrene, was soon in readiness, and crept to the side of her preserver.

"Woman, you lead the way, and beware of treachery," said Paul, sternly, and silently and sullenly the negress obeyed.

Passing out of the door, they traversed the antechamber and soon found themselves in the passageway, where the form of the dead Ethiopian lay, half-enveloped in the curtain.

Paul felt Zuleikah shudder as her eyes fell upon the body, but he drew her closer to his side, and rapidly threaded the long passageway.

At the outer door the negress drew back, and said, harshly:

"Now you can be your own guide; give me my gold."

"I will when we are free. Come with me to the water's edge."

The woman muttered a curse and walked on in front, going down the orange avenue, as Paul directed her.

A short walk brought them to the banks of the Bosphorus, and here, to his surprise, almost terror, Paul Malvern discovered no boat awaiting him.

But he kept back his surprise, and said, quietly:

"Woman, lead to the landing-stairs of the kiosk."

The negress walked off, and the two followed her along the shore, until the marble stairway was reached.

Here lay a half-dozen caiques, or barges, and selecting one of the smallest, Paul drew it alongside the steps and aided Zuleikah therein.

Then he turned to the negress and said:

"Here is the purse I promised you. Make up what story you please about the dead slave—when I am in safety your son will return to you."

So saying he sprang into the caique and seized the oars, while Eldrene weighed the heavy gold in her hand, and said, gruffly:

"See that my son return to me—or I'll spend the gold in tracking you to death."

"So be it, woman," and thus saying Paul sent the light craft off from the shore with one vigorous stroke of the oars.

As he did so two forms arose in one of the barges, and beholding them and believing all discovered, Eldreno cried out:

"Seize him, slaves—he has robbed the harem." Instantly the two slaves sprang to their feet, the starlight displaying their black faces and white costumes, while they seemed anxious to make up for their having been asleep on their posts by capturing the bold raider of a pasha's harem.

Seeing their intention, Paul Malvern gave one more vigorous pull at his oars, and then the starlight gleamed upon a pistol in his outstretched hand.

Then followed a flash, a ringing, echoing report, a wild death-shriek, a splash in the water, and again silence.

Once more he bent to his oars, with one word of comfort to the crouching Zuleikah, and like an arrow from the bow the light caique shot down the Bosphorus, keeping close in under the shadow of the trees along the bank.

But the shot had alarmed the inmates of the kiosk; lights flashed hither and thither, and the shrill voice of the old negress called for aid, and hurrying feet were heard rushing toward the landing.

But, pulling with herculean strength, Paul Malvern sent the caique flying from the scene of danger, and soon the sounds died away in the distance.

A short, hard pull and he left the shadow of the trees, and struck boldly out into the Bosphorus, heading for the anchorage of the yacht.

Behind him, far off on the waters, were visible several moving objects, which he knew to be boats in search of him; but with a mile's start he did not fear them, and kept swiftly on toward the spot where he had left the vessel.

Why he had not found a boat awaiting him, or why if Captain Delos could not return he had not sent Taras to meet him, he could not conjecture; but that all would in the end be well he had not the slightest doubt, and spoke cheerfully to his fair companion, who certainly displayed considerable nerve in the trying ordeal in which she found herself.

Having rowed for half an hour, and feeling that he must be near the vessel, Paul momentarily rested upon his oars, and turned to glance about for the yacht.

To his surprise she was not visible.

"Can I have missed my bearings?" he muttered, and again he bent a searching glance around him.

"No, she was anchored about half a dozen cables' length off the seraglio, and yonder towers that dark pile—by Heaven! she has gone."

Again he strained his eyes in every direction, and his face became cold with dread, his hands almost nerveless, for he felt that the yacht had certainly gone; he was upon the Bosphorus in an open boat—his only companion a beautiful girl whom he had boldly rescued from a harem's walls.

Here and there upon the starlit waters were his pursuers; haven, he knew of none; what to do he could not tell; to be captured was certain death to both.

The thought was terrible, yet true, and in almost despair the brave man bent his head, hardly daring to speak to or look upon the fair girl whom he had brought forth from a life of gilded misery to face a horrible death.

CHAPTER VII. THE FUGITIVES.

ALTHOUGH at first almost overwhelmed with the perilous situation he found himself in, Paul Malvern soon rallied, and his intrepid nature once more arose to meet any crisis that might come.

Had he been alone upon the Bosphorus, he would have enjoyed the danger; but with a young girl relying upon him for protection, and deserted by the yacht, with no place of refuge, he felt indeed the fearful responsibility falling upon him.

"Were we not to have met my cousin here? Did you not say that his yacht was anchored off the seraglio?" asked the musical tones of Zuleikah.

"Yes, fair lady, but some sudden danger has caused your cousin to put to sea, I fear, for I can nowhere discover his vessel; but do not despair, I will do all in my power to save you from recapture, and in time all will come well. I hope you do not believe me guilty of having deceived you," and Paul spoke with great earnestness.

"No, oh! no; you would not do that—I believe, as you say, that some danger has caused my cousin to fly; he will return; but where shall we go? See, those boats are coming closer."

That was the question which Paul was striving in vain to answer: where should they go?

Suddenly a thought flashed upon him—he would go to an inn where, in better days he had passed much of his time.

When poverty overtook him he had not gone back to the inn, so that the worthy host did not know him as other than a guest with means.

Instantly determining upon his course, he

seized the oars once more, and again the light caique was flying over the waters; and not an instant too soon, for in his moments of apathy two pursuing barges had approached quite near to him.

Finding that he would be pursued, Paul determined to land, and fly through the streets of the town, and thus elude his followers.

A few strong strokes brought him to a stone stairway descending into the water, and here he quickly sprang ashore, at the same time aiding Zuleikah to a footing on the steps.

"Come, lady, we must hasten," and drawing her hand within his arm, he strode rapidly away, turning the next corner, to come full upon a patrol of guards, who had evidently been watching his approach from the river.

"Inshallah! who are you?" exclaimed one of the guards, evidently an officer.

Paul threw himself upon the offensive, and, with his drawn scimitar, commanded sternly:

"Stand aside! I pass here. He who attempts to bar my way does so at his peril!"

The Turks shrunk back momentarily, for the tall form, bared scimitar, flashing eyes and brave manner of the American awed them; but the next instant the party in pursuit, five black slaves, dashed up, and Paul found himself between two foes, immeasurably his superior in numbers.

Yet still he stood at bay, determined not to yield without a struggle, and his gleaming scimitar was held on guard.

"He has robbed the harem of his lordship, Al Sirat Pasha, of one of his most beautiful ladies; he must restore her, and suffer death for his temerity," said the kaid of the slaves, in an angry tone, yet at the same time keeping at a respectful distance from the sweep of Paul's scimitar.

"If you have done this, signor, your death is assured. Return the maiden to the kaid, and I will claim you as a prisoner," said the officer of the guard.

"The ring! try the ring!" whispered Zuleikah, earnestly, into the ear of Paul, as she clung to him.

"The ring? What ring?" answered Paul, at a loss to understand the words of the maiden.

"The ring on your left little finger. It is a signet; try its virtue," and Zuleikah placed her hand upon a small seal ring that glittered in the light of the lamp upon the hand of her preserver.

Yet Paul seemed still at a loss to comprehend her, until Zuleikah repeated, more earnestly than before:

"Try the ring. Demand to go unmolested by virtue of the signet ring you wear."

Feeling that there was some good reason for the maiden's words, although at a loss to understand why, Paul seized upon the hint, and holding forth his hand he said, sternly:

"Respect this signet, and allow me to pass with her whom I protect."

Holding out his hand as he spoke, he turned the ring to that the lantern's light fell full upon it.

The officer of the guard stepped forward, glanced upon the ring, and then bent low in obeisance, while he responded in most humble tones:

"I respect the signet, your Highness; pass on! God is great."

With amazement he could scarcely conceal, Paul Malvern lowered his scimitar, saluted the officer, and drawing the arm of Zuleikah closer in his own, walked rapidly away, leaving the guard and the group of slaves in respectful attitude, watching his departure.

A walk of half an hour through the deserted streets of Constantinople brought him to a spacious building, which he seemed to know well.

Knocking at a small doorway, Paul drew Zuleikah into the shadow, and awaited a response to his summons at the portal.

It soon came in the person of a Turk, who inquired what was wanted.

"You remember me, Abdallah? I seek chambers for myself and a lady who is with me. See that no one knows of my coming here," said Paul, stepping forward where the light of the lamp fell upon him.

"The signor American! It shall be as you direct. Come in," and the fugitives passed within, to find themselves, a few moments after, in most comfortable rooms.

"Here, lady, you can rest, and to-morrow I will endeavor to find some means of escape from this hated city; for I cannot believe that Captain Delos has gone off without leaving some word for me. Should you need me, I am within the adjoining room," and Paul bowed low to the maiden, who had thrown herself, as though fatigued, upon a pile of silken cushions.

"Signor, I beg that you will not expose yourself to danger. Be careful, even though you wear the sultan's private signet upon your hand."

"The sultan's private signet?" said Paul, with surprise, looking attentively at the ring upon his finger.

"Yes; are you in ignorance of it? Nay, you must be, for to-night you seemed not to know its virtue," and Zuleikah gazed earnestly into

the handsome, puzzled face of the American who replied:

"Lady, this ring is all I held of value in the wide world, last night. I had even forgotten its possession, until changing my clothes for this uniform, the past day, I found it stowed away in an obscure pocket of my vest; how I became possessed of it is a long and mayhap interesting story, which, if time hangs heavy on our hands to-morrow, I will explain. Now, I will let you retire to rest, for sadly you need it; but to your ready wit I owe it that we were extricated from our peril to-night, for frankly I confess I knew not that the ring had any power."

"It has wonderful power. There are but three of those signets in existence, and every officer of the sultan knows their virtue and is compelled to respect it. One of those rings the sultan wears, the second was given to Al Sirat Pasha, and his harem favorite wears it, and there I saw it and learned its power. The third you have on your finger. With it in your possession you wield immense influence here in this land of the Turk."

Paul made no reply, but dazed, almost, by what he had heard, and believing, after his experience of the past twenty-four hours, that he was living in a land of magic and mystery, as it were, he bowed low to his beautiful companion and retired to his own chamber, where for hours he turned about on his soft couch, his brain and heart on fire with the whirlwind of thoughts that crowded upon him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNCIL OF PLOTTERS.

WITH a feeling of unrest Paul Malvern was early astir, and sauntered forth to have a glance over the Bosphorus to see if the sails of the yacht greeted his eyes.

Obtaining a position where he had a full view of the Bosphorus he looked long and searchingly around for the Silver Scimitar, as Julian Delos had named his vessel; but nowhere was she visible.

Other craft in numbers were dotting the sun-gilded waters of the Golden Horn and Bosphorus, but nowhere could the slender masts and trim hull of the yacht be discerned.

"Mashallah! does the signor seek the flag of his nation at the peak of some vessel on the bosom of the Bosphorus?"

Paul turned quickly upon the speaker, and beheld a man whose dark hair and eyes, classical features and general bearing denoted him as a Greek of the higher order.

"I seek a vessel that but yesterday lay off this point. She is not at her anchorage to-day," he replied, quietly, and with a show of no particular interest.

"A vessel carrying the ensign of Great Britain—a trim-looking cruiser?"

"Doubtless; she seemed like an armed vessel."

The Greek looked fixedly into the face of Paul and then said, in an interrogatory manner:

"You are neither Turk, Armenian or Jew?"

"Neither."

"And yet not a Greek?"

"No; I am an American."

"Still you wear the uniform of an officer on board the cruiser that was anchored off here yesterday?"

Paul made no reply; he knew not how far to trust the Greek, who, after a moment's silence, continued:

"Signor, are you he whom men call Paul Malvern?"

Paul started. Had his steps been dogged? After all was he to lose his life, and, worse still, be instrumental, innocently it might be, in bringing death upon the beautiful Zuleikah?

He glanced quickly around him; none other were in sight of them, and, laying his hand upon his scimitar, he said, quietly:

"Yes; I am Paul Malvern; what would you, Signor Greek?"

"You left the vessel last night in company with Captain Delos?"

"How know you this, signor?"

"It matters not; answer my question."

"Yes, I left the yacht last night."

"And rescued from the kiosk of Al Sirat Pasha a Cretan maiden—"

"Proceed, signor; I am all attention," quietly responded Paul, still grasping the hilt of his scimitar.

"Signor Malvern, take your hand from your weapon; I seek you, not for harm, but for your welfare. I was seeking to learn something of you, when I saw you approach this spot and gaze out upon the Bosphorus. We have never met before, yet we are brothers in arms. I am a Greek, and I bear you a message from the Signor Delos."

Still Paul would not commit himself, for the mysterious disappearance of Captain Delos, and his being in a land of strange adventures and stranger people, made him cautious, and he replied, quietly:

"Granted that I am Paul Malvern, what message do you bring me from the Signor Delos?"

The Greek gazed searchingly into his face a moment, and then said:

"You left the yacht last night, accompanied by the Signor Delos and four men; you sought the kiosk of Al Sirat Pasha, and a signal of recall being displayed from the masthead of the Silver Scimitar, the captain returned on board, leaving you to carry out his plans. Am I right, signor?"

"Proceed."

"The signal on board the yacht I caused to be displayed, for I went to tell Captain Delos to get under way at once, as a cruiser was going to anchor alongside of him, his vessel being suspected."

"The Signor Delos had just returned on board when we noticed a cruiser coming down from the Gulf of Izruid, and the cables were slipped, sail set, and the Silver Scimitar at once headed for the Sea of Marmora, leaving me in my caique to go and look after you; but a guard-boat was watching me, and I was forced to land in Istamboul, but I have been constantly on the watch since to find you, for I learned that you escaped last night with one of the pasha's beauties. Signor, am I to be trusted now?"

"What message sent Signor Delos to me?"

"That he would await your coming in one of the inlets on the southern shores of the Island Lemnos."

"How am I to reach him?"

"That I will manage. A small coasting vessel shall be chartered to-day, and upon it you shall go, accompanied by two-score Franks, Greeks, Americans, and a few renegade Turks, whom we have enlisted in the Cretan service. Return to your hostelry, for I know that you have found shelter somewhere; change your uniform for the dress of a Greek, and come to my house—it is in the Jews' quarter; ask for the house of Dimitri, the Greek merchant; there you will meet others friendly to our cause, and we will decide upon how and when you must leave this nest of infidels."

Paul Malvern no longer doubted his new-found friend, and frankly held forth his hand, which the other grasped warmly.

"I will at once purchase the required costume, and join you before very long; until then, adieu," and so saying, Paul walked briskly away, happy at having solved the mystery of the yacht's departure, and that he could cheer the heart of Zuleikah.

Entering a shop, he soon made the required purchases, with gold left him by Captain Delos, and then walked rapidly back to his hostelry, where he quickly changed his clothing, and having partaken of breakfast, sought an audience with Zuleikah.

The maiden received him with a heightened color and gracious manner, and seemed even more beautiful by daylight than by lamplight, for the beauty of her complexion was displayed to better advantage.

"Lady, I bear good news. Your cousin awaits us at an island in the Archipelago, and perhaps to-night we start to join him. I go now to meet a Greek, one of his intimate friends."

Zuleikah received the intelligence with joy, and said softly:

"Signor, I have full trust in you, and yet I long to be away from this hated land."

Paul made some gallant remark, bade the maiden have hope, and then wended his way toward the Jews' quarter of Constantinople, where, without difficulty, he found the shop of the Greek merchant.

Upon inquiry he found that the Signor Dimitri awaited him, and he was ushered into a chamber where sat a score of men drinking sherbet, and smoking their fragrant chibouques.

The room was dense with perfumed tobacco smoke, yet Paul could discern at a glance that the Greek predominated among those present, while there were Jews, Franks, Americans, and one or two heavily-bearded dark-faced Turks.

"Signor American, I greet you. These are our friends, who, here under the very shadow of the Sublime Porte, are plotting to tear the brightest jewel from his crescent. Signors, this is the brave gentleman of whom I spoke—the well-trusted friend of Captain Delos," and at the words of the Greek merchant all arose to their feet and bowed, while several came forward and offered their hands in token of friendship.

In the conversation that then followed it was arranged that the Signor Dimitri should that day charter a swift sailing craft, load her with supposed goods, but in reality with supplies for the Cretans, and dispatch her to the islands in the Archipelago, on a trading voyage.

Also it was decided that she should call at midnight, and pick up, as she sped down the Sea of Marmora, several boat-loads of men who were to be lying in wait for her, and that Paul Malvern should go in command.

"And where shall I join the craft?" asked Paul of Signor Dimitri.

"At her anchorage, just after dark," and in a whisper, he continued, "and as to your fair companion, I will give you the dress of a Greek lad for her to wear. Your bold robbery of a harem has set the people wild, and you must be very careful; her death and yours

would follow your capture; but the costume I give you for her will fully disguise her."

Paul thanked the kind Greek, and a Jew present volunteering his vessel for the service, it was soon arranged, a rendezvous appointed, and the council of plotters at an end for the day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FLIGHT FOR FREEDOM.

THE muezzins' call of "God is great" had echoed from the minarets of Constantinople, and the city was buried in sleep, while the stars their vigil kept upon land and water.

Still the stars were not faithful guardians of the ever faithful city of Istamboul, although their golden beauty was mirrored in the waters of the sleeping Bosphorus, for there were plotters abroad who were engaged in a plan to tear from the sultan his beautiful island of Crete.

Upon the waters of the Bosphorus, just beginning to roll into tiny wavelets before the incoming breeze, lay at anchor a trim-looking craft, well-known in Eastern seas as of a class of coast-traders called a tartan,* and in use mostly in the Mediterranean.

As the breeze freshened a large caique came dancing over the waters, and ran alongside the tartan; from it sprung half a dozen persons, one of whom was recognized as Paul Malvern, another as the Signor Dimitri—the others were men whom the reader met at the Council of Plotters, excepting a slightly-formed, graceful youth, who clung close to the side of Paul.

"Now, signor, all is well thus far; you have a faithful crew and an experienced pilot. Remember, you join the Silver Scimitar on the southern shore of the Isle of Lemnos. Farewell, and may the God of the Christian preserve you, and tear poor Crete from the hard grasp of the accursed Turk."

Signor Dimitri grasped Paul's hand as he spoke, and bowing to the youth, turned and entered the waiting caique, followed by his companions, who also bade the young American God-speed.

As the caique left the side of the tartan, the white sails were spread, the anchor tripped, and away sped the fleet craft down the starlit waters of the Bosphorus.

Swiftly past the huge Seraglio she glided, then the Seven Towers, frowning and gloomy, were left astern, and the prow was headed for a dark object lying far out upon the waters.

Nearer and nearer the craft drew to the object; which soon proved to be a large barge filled with men, who without checking the speed of the vessel, threw themselves on board, and quietly took their designated posts, while the caique, with its two oarsmen, were left dancing in the wake.

Thus were two other boat-loads picked up, and then the prow of the tartan was turned boldly out into the Sea of Marmora.

But a cry came across the waters, and another boat was discerned, larger than the others.

"The Signor Dimitri, I thought, spoke of but three boats; still he may have been mistaken," said Paul, to the heavy-bearded Greek pilot who held the helm.

"Yonder fellows hailed as though they belonged to the party; we had better run down to them, signor," replied the pilot.

Paul nodded assent, and in a few moments the bows of the tartan were crossed by the barge, which was skillfully laid alongside.

"A guard-boat! a guard-boat!" rung the cry of alarm as a score of Turkish marines hurled themselves upon the deck of the tartan.

With a bound Paul Malvern was in their midst, and with a ringing cry to his men to rally to his aid, his keen scimitar swept around him with terrible effect.

Then followed a short, deadly struggle, and the white wake of the tartan, as she still sped on her course, was tinged with red, and the guard-boat was left astern filled with a bleeding, dying mass of humanity.

"Now we must run for it, pilot. We have done that which would sentence us all to the bow-string," said Paul.

"Yes, signor; it is a bad matter. You handle a scimitar well, signor, and Crete has obtained a bold arm in yours," replied the old pilot, who from his place at the helm had seen and enjoyed the short, but deadly strife.

"Would that my down-trodden land had a few more such brave defenders," said a soft, sweet voice.

Paul turned quickly, and beheld the youth standing behind him.

"Lady Zuleikah! I deemed you in the cabin."

"No; I came out when I heard the sounds of combat. Signor, when that boat gets back we will have swift cruisers sent in pursuit."

"You are right, lady, we must crowd all sail. Once through the Dardanelles and we can elude our pursuers in the Archipelago; but it will take yonder boat some time to get ashore, for there is not a man in it who is not sorely wounded. Pilot, spread on every stitch she will stagger under."

* A Mediterranean coaster, having one mast, a bowsprit and huge sail spread by a lateen-yard.—THE AUTHOR.

The order was obeyed, and, like a mettled charger the tartan bounded along on her course before a ten-knot breeze. Once through the narrow strait of the Hellespont (or Dardanelles) and they did not have much to fear; but, more than a hundred long miles lay between them and that hope of safety, and all on board felt that their lives hung but by a thread.

The small cabin of the tartan had been given up to Zuleikah, who soon, at the solicitation of Paul, retired to it to gain some rest.

As for Paul and the patriot band they were willing to rough it on deck.

Through the long hours of the night the vessel sped before the strong breeze rushing down from the Black sea, and when the sun arose over the waters the island of Marmora lay ahead, a few points off their port-bow.

Yet swiftly along the vessel was urged until the strait was reached, and the tartan was bounding rapidly through the waters, with the lowlands of Asia Minor on one hand and the long peninsula of Adrianople on the other.

As the vessel neared the narrow channel, which must be passed ere she gained the open waters of the Archipelago, the excitement on board became intense, for they knew not but what a Turkish cruiser had already been ordered out to lay in wait for them, placed on guard by a telegraphic dispatch from Constantinople.

Sweeping the shore with his glass Paul Malvern discovered a small vessel just putting out from an inlet upon the bold shores of which stood the Castle of Europe and Asia.

A closer inspection proved that the vessel was armed, and was standing across the course of the tartan.

"Pilot, yonder craft is on the alert for us. She has doubtless been telegraphed of our flight and combat with the guard-boat," said Paul, quietly.

"I think not, signor. As I before said, the storm of two nights ago blew down the wires and they could not have been yet repaired. The vessel is a Turkish cruiser, that is certain; but only placed here as a sentinel to watch all craft going and coming through the straits—we have our proper papers."

"Yes, if he boards us we will rely upon them; if not satisfactory we must fight to the bitter end. Better die bravely with arms in our hands, than ignominiously—ha! there is a shot for us to heave to. Obey the summons, pilot!"

A moment after the tartan was lying to, while all on board but her immediate crew had sought concealment in the hold.

The cruiser now came swiftly on, and in ten minutes more luffed up into the wind and sent a boat aboard containing an officer and half a dozen seamen.

"The cruiser has four guns and about fifty men. If it comes to the worst we can fight her, and I feel confident with every hope of victory," and so saying Paul went to the gangway to receive his unwelcome visitor.

An officer sprung aboard, a Turk, armed with scimitar and pistols and in full uniform.

Paul saluted him politely, and asked:

"Why are we brought to, signor?"

"Do you command this vessel?" gruffly asked the officer.

"I do."

"You are not a Turk?"

"No, an American."

"You sail under the sultan's flag," and the officer pointed to the red flag of Turkey flying over the vessel.

"Yes; I am in the service of a subject of the sultan; here are my papers."

The Turk took the vessel's papers and glanced attentively at them, and then said:

"When did you leave Istamboul?"

"At midnight last."

"Did you know of any vessel answering the description of your craft, running down a guard-boat off the Bosphorus?"

"We saw no guard-boat run down, signor," and Paul spoke without the movement of a muscle or a change of countenance, for he felt that they were suspected and the slightest thing might betray them.

Yet, with truth, he could say that no guard-boat had been run down by his vessel.

"Did such an occurrence take place, signor?" he asked innocently.

"Yes; I was at anchor in the Gulf of Enos last night, and a dispatch came that a vessel had fled from the Bosphorus, and in her flight run down a guard-boat, so I at once set sail to head her off at the Hellespont. Your vessel answers the description given of the one, yet you seem not to be an enemy to the sultan."

"I think you will find men on this craft who have long been faithful subjects of the sultan, whom may Allah preserve many years," replied Paul, with affected Moslem piety.

The Turk was silent for some seconds, and then said:

"Signor, these are troublous times and the sultan has many enemies around him. I shall hold your vessel until I can get definite news from Istamboul. If the event referred to is true, I shall certainly hear from the grand vizier as the lines are working again."

"You have the power to detain me, signor."

and hence I must submit. Where would you have me anchor?" asked Paul in a tone of perfect submission.

"I shall take you further in shore," and the Turk turned to signal his own vessel.

"The ring! It is your only chance, except to try your strength with him."

Paul started. At his side stood Zuleikah, who immediately returned to the cabin.

"Signor, you have no right to detain my vessel, and I demand that you allow me to proceed immediately upon my way," said Paul, when the Turk again joined him.

"Your demand is useless. I half suspect this craft of being bent on some mischief."

Paul could not but give the Turk credit for hitting pretty near the truth; but he said, sternly:

"As you refused my demand, I now command you, signor, to leave this deck and allow my vessel to proceed upon her voyage."

The Turk's face was a picture of amazement—he, the commander of a Turkish cruiser, to be thus bearded by the master of a coasting vessel! The idea was preposterous! and he dropped his hand upon his sword-hilt as if intending to punish the bold insulter of an officer of the sultan.

"Hold, signor! take your hand from off your scimitar. You may be armed with guns and men, but I wear that which you dare not refuse to obey. By this signet ring I command you to leave this deck."

The voice of Paul rung with stern decision, and his left hand was outstretched, so that the Turk's eyes fell upon the ring.

One glance and his demeanor changed; he was no longer the haughty officer, but the submissive subject.

"I obey, your highness; I knew not that—"

"Enough! your boat awaits you! Be careful not to refer to this meeting."

The Turk bowed low, and retreating backward to the gangway sprang into his boat and rowed away.

A few moments after the tartan was again under sail, stretching away toward the Gulf of Euxos, as though thither bound; but ere a league divided the two vessels, Paul saw a large cruiser suddenly sweep into sight and signal the smaller one.

"Pilot, that vessel has just come out of the strait, and is in chase of us. I feel confident," said Paul, as he turned his glass upon the two cruisers.

What the conversation was that the two commanders held, of course those on board the tartan could not know; but the result was that the vessel that had brought the Cretan patriots to stood away under full sail down the Asiatic coast, while the large cruiser headed for the Island of Lemnos.

"My ring has protected me from pursuit; but I fear for Captain Delos, for I am afraid his whereabouts are known."

"Pilot, as soon as we drop yonder vessels from sight, stand for the rendezvous with the Silver Scimitar; she may need our aid."

So saying Paul descended into the cabin in obedience to a call from Zuleikah, whose ready wit had again saved them from deadly peril, for Paul had forgotten the existence of the signet ring, until reminded of it by the maiden.

CHAPTER X.

JULIAN DELOS AT BAY.

LATE into the hours of the night, following the scenes related in the last chapter, Julian Delos remained on deck, pacing to and fro with nervous tread.

Quietly at anchor lay his beautiful vessel, in a land-locked harbor, or cove, of the Island of Lemnos, and anxiously was the Cretan commander longing to hear from those whom stern duty to his compatriots had forced him to desert, for he felt that he must save his vessel, with its valuable supplies, no matter at what risk.

"Signor Stellos?"

"Signor!" and a young and handsome Greek officer came aft and saluted his commander.

"Is not that a sail in the offing?" and Julian pointed seaward.

"It is, signor. She is standing in toward the cove."

"It is not a tartan, and therefore cannot be—Ha! it is an armed vessel, for my glass gives me a good view of her now."

"Stellos, yonder craft is a Turkish cruiser, and if she discovers us in here we must fight for it. See, she stands right for the inlet. Call the men quickly to quarters and have all in readiness."

The lieutenant at once obeyed the order, while Julian, after arming himself thoroughly, again paced the deck with thoughtful tread, ever and anon watching the approaching vessel, which it was now certain was standing for the cove.

As she came nearer it was evident that she was a swift-sailing cruiser, doubtless a Turk, and larger and heavier every way than the Silver Scimitar.

Nearer and nearer she approached, until, suddenly luffing up, as if fearful of venturing into the harbor, she fired a gun to leeward to challenge the yacht to come out.

To this Julian Delos paid no attention, but quietly waited the further movements of his enemy, for such he now felt confident the strange craft was.

Finding that he could not get the yacht to come out and fight him, and there not being depth of water for his vessel to run in, the cruiser's commander stood on down the coast for nearly a league, and there apparently came to anchor, as the masts were plainly visible above the low and narrow neck of land that formed one arm of the little cove.

"He has doubtless given up the idea of attacking us to-night. Let the men rest at the guns, Signor Stellos," said Julian, watching his enemy narrowly through his glass.

Thus passed an hour, and bending over the bulwark, gazing listlessly out over the waters, the Cretan was dreaming of his past career, when his quick eye beheld a dark object upon the water.

Instantly he was all attention, and with surprise discovered that it was a boat, evidently crowded with men.

Astern of it was visible another boat, and still another, until four slowly, noiselessly-moving barges were discovered creeping upon the yacht.

"As I live! they have landed, carried their boats across the neck of land, and are expecting to take us by surprise! A cunning act; thank God they found me not napping."

Swiftly Julian ran along his decks, awaking his officers and men, ordering them to their posts, and bidding them not make the slightest sound.

When he returned to the quarter-deck, the four barges were not a cable's length away, and with muffled oars were coming silently and slowly on.

Nearer and nearer they approached, until the crisp night air was broken by the ringing voice of Julian Delos.

"Fire!"

The discharge of the heavy ordnance shook the yacht from truck to keel, and the flash of the guns lit up the waters, momentarily as bright as noonday.

But mingling with the dying echoes of the artillery came the crashing of timbers, the shriek of the wounded, the stern orders of the officers, and three of the four boats pressed on toward the yacht. The fourth, with its human, dying, bleeding freight, went down beneath the blood-stained waters.

One order from their commander, and the Cretans stood ready to meet the shock of combat.

And soon it came, for the barges ranged alongside the schooner, and over the high bulwarks pressed a living mass of humanity, wild-eyed, savage-hearted, and bent on slaying their fellow-men.

Then flashed forth revolvers and carbines, and steel met steel, while death-blows were given and received upon either hand, and the shouts of combatants filled the air.

The light of the flashing firearms plainly showed the Cretans that their foes were their bitterest enemies, the Turks, and they knew full well that they need expect no mercy, even should they surrender.

Hotter and fiercer raged the combat, until, having gained a foothold upon the vessel, and being in vastly superior numbers, the Turkish officers rallied their men to press aft and hurl the Cretans into the sea.

Steadily they then pressed forward, and notwithstanding the fierce courage of the Cretans, they were steadily driven back by mere force of numbers, until Julian Delos felt that the tide of battle must set against him.

But never man possessed braver heart, and he determined, if die he must, that their victory should cost the Turks dearly, and send many a wail of sorrow through the land.

"Men, it is death to surrender! Die here on your decks, as Cretans should die!" rung out the stern voice of Julian, and to a man the devoted band echoed the cry.

"Yes, we'll die here! Down with the infidel Turks!"

Then more fiercely did the battle rage, until, with a mere handful of his men around him, Julian Delos stood at the limit of his quarter deck, and a lull fell upon the combat—the calm before the last storm that must sweep the Cretans to destruction.

Suddenly a tall form sprang over the bulwark and rushed between the two parties, his gleaming scimitar in his hand, his eyes blazing, his whole attitude that of a man who had no fear, and would be obeyed.

"Hold! Moslems, lower your blades! What means this attack?"

The light of the battle-lanterns fell upon the strange intruder, displaying the splendid form and daring face of Paul Malvern.

A cry of joy burst from the lips of Julian Delos, while the Turkish officer, a fine-looking, intrepid man of forty, said, sternly:

"Who are you, signor, that dares to thus order an officer of the sultan to desist from his duty in punishing traitors?"

"Who are the traitors, Turk?"

"They stand there. This vessel is in the ser-

vice of the rebellious Cretans, and left the Bosphorus three nights ago. I came in pursuit of a vessel, a tender of this craft, also supplied with arms. A deserter told me where to find this Cretan corsair, and I came hither to capture her."

"Signor, ere you act upon the story of a deserter you should first know that you are right. You have made a sad blunder, yet believed that you were right. This vessel is in my service, and—"

"And who are you?" asked the Turkish officer, surprised at the bold manner of Paul.

"I am one who holds the power to order you to death for this night's work. Do you recognize my right, signor captain?"

As Paul Malvern spoke he held forth his left hand, and the ring upon his little finger glittered beneath the eyes of the astonished Turk.

"The secret signet! Mercy, your Highness—mercy to thy slave. I knew not that this vessel was under your orders—your command. I deemed the craft a Cretan corsair. I was so informed, your august Highness, by the deserter—"

"Where is this deserter?"

"He is on my vessel, beyond the neck of land. Had his story proved false I intended to slay him."

"See that you carry out your intention as soon as you return on board your vessel; and, mark you, signor, if it come to my ears that a ripple of this night's scene has gone abroad, I warn you that it would have been better had you never lived. My actions, for the present, I would keep in mystery. Go, and recall the cruiser you sent down the coast of Aria yesterday; and again let me warn you that no word of this must reach the minister of war, or through him the sultan."

"I obey, your Highness, and I thank you for your clemency toward your humble slave."

"Now begone, and bear with you your wounded."

Glad to escape from beneath the angry eye of one who were the secret signet, the Turkish officer bent low three times in salutation, and in ten minutes after the barges left the side of the yacht.

"Well, is this all a dream, or have I been deceived in one who told me he was but a friendless wanderer?" and Julian Delos stepped forward and confronted Paul Malvern, who replied:

"It is no dream, and I have not deceived you. Now I cannot say more, for there are sufferers around us who need our care. Suffice it that I left Stamboul safely, though we had a combat with a guard-boat, and the tartan, loaded with supplies and three-score brave men, you can see yonder through the gloom. Seeing your danger, I dropped anchor, sprang into a small boat, and came to your aid."

"And Zuleikah?"

"Is on the tartan, safe and well."

"Thank God! Paul Malvern, you have again saved my life—nay, more, you have aided the Cretans as no other man has done. How you became possessed of that secret signet I will not ask; but certain it is that in it you hold a power second only to that of Abdul Aziz, the sultan."

"That there is a deep mystery attached to the ring I well know, and the story of how I became possessed of it I will one day make known to you. Three nights since I discovered its power, through the fair Zuleikah, and this is the third time it has served me safely. Come, let us call the tartan alongside, transfer the men and supplies, and allow that craft to return to Constantinople."

Aroused from his amazement, Julian Delos once more became the energetic commander, and half an hour after welcomed the beautiful Zuleikah into the cabin of the Silver Scimitar, and from her lips learned the story of her escape from the harem of Al Sirat Pasha, and their flight from Constantinople.

CHAPTER XI.

KALLOOLAH.

I MUST now beg the kind reader to return with me to the scene in the Haunted Ruin, the combat between Al Sirat Pasha and the Cretan, El Estin, in the opening chapter of this story.

In a ghastly heap lay the Cretan where he had fallen; but, in the shadow of the ruined arch, so that he was not visible from the spot where stood the weird-looking being, whose sudden appearance and stern command to the Turk had caused him to fly in terror from the scene.

Like a marble statue stood the woman, her arm still outstretched and pointing in the direction in which the Turk had disappeared—her face cold, hard and stern, her eyes fairly blazing.

But presently she started; her head was turned one side, as though to catch some sound that had broken upon the air.

"Father!"

Clear, flute-like the voice calling rung out through the still night and awoke many an echo through the old ruin.

"Father! where are you?" again came the voice, speaking in the tongue of the modern Greek.

As had the Turk bounded away at sight of the spectral form that had so unexpectedly confronted him, so away flew the weird-looking being at the sound of that voice, and into the dark scenes of the crumbling old ruin she disappeared like a very phantom.

"Father! are you here?" again was heard in the same sweet tones, and over the hill-top appeared a female form, which, upon nearer approach, the moonlight revealed to be a young girl of surpassing beauty.

Directing her steps directly toward where the Cretan lay, his life-blood oozing away rapidly, the film of death already dimming his eyes, the maiden glanced nervously around her, and suddenly came to a halt.

Then again she moved forward, her light footfall scarcely bruising the emerald sod, until she stood plainly revealed in the brilliant light of the moon.

She seemed scarcely more than seventeen, and her faultless, graceful form was clad in the costume of a Cretan woman of the higher order.

Her face was of that classical, almost perfect, Grecian type so much admired, and her eyes, bright, large and full of passion, were fringed by the longest lashes.

Every feature was one of beauty, every motion graceful in the extreme.

As her gaze swept seaward, her eyes fell upon the little vessel, already seen by the Cretan, and she murmured, while a look of scorn crossed her face:

"A Turkish cruiser! yes, the tyrant sultan is already encircling our fair isle with his hounds of war; but brave hearts here have cast off the yoke, and the jewel of Crete will yet be torn from the Moslem crown—Ha! is not that a human voice I hear? No, it must have been the surf upon the beach, for if my father is not here none other would dare come, and I must away, for I like not the solitude."

Again there broke upon her ears the same sound that had before startled her, and she stood in an attitude of listening.

"Yes, it is a human voice—a groan—holy Heaven! can aught of harm have befallen my father?" and she stood in indecision which way to turn.

Then again a deep moan smote her ears, and a voice cried aloud:

"Kaloolah!"

Full of a wild dread the young girl bounded forward, and a dozen paces brought her to the side of El Estin.

"Blessed Mother of God! what woeful fate has fallen upon my poor father? Father, speak to me! It is your Kaloolah," and the maiden threw herself down beside the dying man.

"Kaloolah!" again broke from the Cretan's lips, breathed out in anguish, and yet in a tone that betokened recognition.

"Here, father! here! it is thy Kaloolah—thy wretched daughter Kaloolah; but you are wounded—your clothes are damp with gore—let me away for aid," and the maiden sprang to her feet.

"Hold! it were useless—stay by me, Kaloolah, for I am dying."

"Dying! my father dying? Oh, God! it cannot, must not be," and the maiden buried her face in her hands, her whole form trembling with emotion.

"My child, I am dying. Often before, when my sorrows would drive me hither to commune with my bitter thoughts, you have found me here; now it is the last time that you will ever seek your father in this old ruin; his life is ebbing out," and the Cretan spoke in distinct tones, gaining temporary strength by a supreme effort of his will.

"Father, who has done this foul deed, for you fell not by your own hand?" and a revengeful light flashed in the dark eyes of Kaloolah.

"It is a long story, daughter mine. Your poor old father has been an oarless bark for years—he has been wandering—yes, I have been drifting through life, with you, my Kaloolah, the only guiding star to keep me off the breakers."

"To-night I come back to life upon the very threshold of death. There is much that I would say to you—I can waste no time now, and calm yourself, Kaloolah, and hear me."

"I will, father; but I cannot believe that there is no hope. Let me at once seek the *Hakem*; his drugs, his skill will restore you—"

"It is useless; I am beyond the *Hakem*'s skill."

"But, who has done this deed? You have fallen by some foul hand."

"Listen! this is but the ending of the crime. It is not for this gaping wound; or the death that is coming, that I leave you a legacy of revenge and hate."

"Fifteen years ago—at this very spot, and at this same hour—your mother was torn from my arms by an accursed Infidel, who, then as now, left me wounded, and, he believed, dead."

"Each day and hour since then I have dreamed over that scene, and longed to have that man before me once more. To-night, my dream was realized. We met! Alas! the turmoil and sorrow of those years had weakened my frame, and, although urged on by revenge, I could not cope with his strong arm; he taunted me; he

dared breathe the name of the daughter when he had soul-murdered the mother—"

"And he who did this—who is he?"

The words were cold that came from the beautiful lips—as cold as though they had issued from the mouth of a marble statue.

"He is one high in power and favor with the sultan—one whom his Moslem master loves as a son."

"Were he the Moslem master he should not escape me. In what place shall I seek him? By what name shall I call him?" and the maiden seemed transformed into a very Nemesis.

"Thou art a woman, Kaloolah—a mere child—yet I feel that he who has laid me dying here will cower before you. His crime—"

"Father, I know that there is a fearful, woful tale connected with our family. From chance words I have gathered it; but I ask no more knowledge of the crime. Sufficient that it was against my mother, and that you lie dying here. Only tell me the name of him whom I would search, him who must feel the full weight of an injured woman's revenge—for to Crete, my poor country, and to revenge, I henceforth devote my life."

The beautiful features were now set hard and fierce, and the face grew white with the heat of a stern resolve.

The eyes of the Cretan gazed upon her, and a look of almost triumph flashed in his eyes.

Then he essayed to speak, but the rattle of death choked back his utterance, and his hands clutched his daughter's wildly.

At length, by a mighty effort, he rallied and again his words came slow yet distinct.

"Kaloolah, I must hasten, for I have more to say—I have to pour into your ears a secret—I am one of the secret council of Crete—I am arrayed against the power of the sultan—"

"You, father?"

"Yes, child, and the secret I bequeath to you—at this spot on the coast, ere long, will come a vessel laden with supplies and ammunition for our poor struggling patriots, now resisting Turkish tyranny."

"I was to meet that vessel here; I was to conceal in this ruin its stores, and then bear word to my compatriots in the field; but I am dying, and you must do all that I would have done."

"I will, father—gladly will I, though a maiden, aid my lovely isle in its struggle."

"I know it, Kaloolah—"

Then, in a weak, wandering way, El Estin continued:

"To-night, off on the sea, I beheld a sail—what I hoped it would bring to me, let that pass—she will come now too late—too late; but Kaloolah, when that vessel comes, and the one now in sight, no, it is too dark to see—ha! it is the darkness of death upon me, child—a noble Cretan is her commander—his name is Julian Delos—he too has suffered much from the haughty Moslems—ah! that I had a son to serve Crete now—a son to draw his scimitar in defense of our poor isle, a son to revenge—"

"Father, I will do it! All that a son could do, I will do! Look not upon me as a weak maiden—"

"If thou canst be brave, and act the part of a son, meet Julian Delos here—come nightly to this ruin, for he will come by night, and within its walls you will find safe hiding-places for the treasures he brings, for none will come here—here, where an evil spirit dwells, it is—then go to the camp of the Cretan *Serdar*, the Generalissimo Aztec, and he will send soldiers here for the stores the Signor Delos will bring—do this and thy mother island will bless thee, girl—then—then," and the dying man paused, as though he was hesitating to speak the thought that burned within him.

"Then, father, then?"

"Then seek *Al Sirat*, the Turk—he is a pasha—and commands a wing of the Turkish army here—it was he who took from thee thy mother, child, from me the light of my heart, and bore her away to—but I cannot tell all—"

"It was his blade that let my life out this night—need I say more?"

"His name is—"

"*Al Sirat* Pasha; he wears a golden scimitar, and it was with that weapon he struck at my life."

With these words El Estin fell back exhausted; a change came upon his features, and a cloud swept over his face, behind which the soul might withdraw itself from the broken, dissolving body.

Yet, ere the lamp of life flickered out, there came one momentary flash of reason, one last rekindling of the fire of mortality, and the shadowed eyes again opened, and fixed themselves upon the eager, anguish-swept, half-dazed face of Kaloolah, while the lips murmured:

"Liberty for Crete—revenge thy mother and father, Kaloolah—Alfarida—"

Then all was over: the maiden was alone with the dead!

CHAPTER XII.

THE PHANTOM.

THE little vessel seen by El Estin, from his look-out on the hill, spread her white wings with the first breath of the night-wind, and stood slowly in toward the shore, where was visible

a small inlet or bay, beneath the shelter of the ruin.

Upon her decks all seemed quiet, and few men were visible—just sufficient to work her sails.

Upon her quarter-deck stood three persons already known to the reader—a maiden and two men, whose faces, seen plainly in the streaming moonlight, were those of Zuleikah, Julian Delos and Paul Malvern—the latter no longer the despairing, starving suicide, but metamorphosed into the handsome Cretan officer, ready to dare any danger to serve the infant flag whose folds he had pledged himself to wave in the faces of the cruel Moslems.

As the schooner approached her destined landing-place, the keen eyes of the American and Cretan searched the coast, from low-lying shores to frowning ruin.

Suddenly Paul Malvern turned quickly, and said to Julian Delos:

"Turn your glass on yonder point—there, just beneath the archway of yonder ruin; do you not see two men there engaged in mortal combat?"

Quickly the eyes of Julian sought the designated spot, and he answered:

"By the Prophets! yes—what can it mean?"

"See, they have retreated."

"No, one has driven the other back into the shadow of the ruin—they still struggle—ha! one falls by the scimitar of the other."

"You are right, Malvern; there has been deadly work just enacted on that hill; and strange, there are but few dwellers hereabouts—a few homes of well-to-do farmers—and I know of no Turkish force stationed here, as the army of *Al Sirat* is ten leagues away."

"I do not understand it, nor do I like it, for this is my appointed rendezvous with El Estin."

"It would be well to thoroughly reconnoiter, ere we land any stores. I will go alone to the ruin."

"No, Malvern, you shall risk no danger that I do not share. We will go together, and a score of men can land with us, and be in readiness should we need their aid."

"I can only account for the presence of foes here through troops having been sent from the forces of Hadji Pasha or *Al Sirat* Pasha."

"They must have done so; and yet, but two men were engaged in the struggle, I would swear. How much further do you run in?"

"To within a stone's throw of the land."

"And you had expected to find this spot wholly deserted, Signor Delos?"

"Yes—no—it was agreed that a guide should meet me here; perhaps El Estin himself, to conduct the stores to the command of General Aztec—ha! I have it! Some wandering Turk has stumbled upon the waiting guide. We will go at once to his aid; at any rate, we will find what feet have found their way to this hitherto deserted ruin."

"Taras, run in until within twice the schooner's length from the land; then lay to. Come, Malvern, we must prepare for our trip, and, my sweet cousin, I must beg that you remain in the cabin until we know what danger there is ahead."

"And you would drive me from the contemplation of this beautiful scene, Julian?" asked Zuleikah.

"Yes; we are in danger of being fired upon, for I know not what events await us ashore."

Zuleikah reluctantly retired to the cabin, whither Paul had already gone, and, as the young American passed her on his coming out, she laid her hand gently upon his arm, while she said, softly:

"Remember, you must take care of yourself—for my sake."

"Yes, for your sweet sake, Zuleikah."

There was a sound resembling a kiss, and Paul Malvern hastily left the cabin, to find, upon his arrival on deck, the yacht lying to, and two boats, filled with armed men, alongside.

A moment after Julian Delos joined him, and entering the boats, the order was given in a low tone to give way.

The keels of the barges grated harshly upon the beach, and the two officers sprang ashore, followed by the men.

"Lads, conceal yourselves here. If I need you, I shall call with my whistle," and Julian pointed to a gold whistle on the handle of a dirk in his belt.

Then the two friends set out slowly for the ruin.

It was a long and arduous climb up the steep hillside, for the Cretan would not go up the direct pathway, wishing to approach the ruin from the land side, in case of an ambush awaiting them from any one who had seen their landing.

Around them all was silent—the roar of the surf alone breaking the stillness of the night.

So light were the footsteps, as they went along, that they seemed to glide, rather than walk.

At length they approached the summit of the hill, and before them loomed grandly up the massive ruin, in all its moonlit beauty—every arch, turret and column standing out in bold relief against the silvery sky.

Here they paused to listen; but all was still; a silence like death rested upon the scene.

Nearer and nearer they crept to the crumbling pile, and at length stood at the window of the structure, and glanced within the grass-grown court, upon the wood and moss-covered walls.

There was but a dim light within; the moonlight did not penetrate through every archway.

Here they paused, almost uncertain what to do—awed by the deathlike silence—the memories of bygone centuries that crowded upon them.

Then, as their eyes peered into the dim obscurity, there suddenly flitted before them a spectral form—a gliding form, clad in snow-white.

Julian Delos started, strained his eyes, and then turned to see if it was a phantom conjured in his own brain by the surroundings. No; Paul Malvern's eyes were staring also at the weird being.

"It is a specter—good God!" whispered the Cretan, whose nature was not wholly free from the inbred superstitions of his race.

Paul Malvern's reply was to bound forward, scimitar in hand, wrenching himself loose from the clutch of Julian upon his arm, and unheeding his wildly-spoken:

"Holy Heaven! do not dare!"

A few quick, long leaps carried Paul to the spot where had stood the white-robed being.

But, like mist, or a spirit from the land beyond the grave, she had disappeared.

He glanced around him, and, undaunted by her mysterious disappearance, darted into every shaded nook, every dark crevice; but nowhere was the being visible; it had faded like the air—gone like smoke from the view.

Surprised, and unable to solve the mystery, Paul at length paused in his search, just as Julian Delos stood by his side.

"Come; you are mad to thus tempt the spirit of this ruin. For years this place has been known to be haunted, and none come hither. Had I not beheld, with my own sight, the phantom, I would never have believed the word of others.

"This is a warning, death lies before us; yet we must face it."

The Cretan spoke in deep, earnest tones, and Paul felt that his whole nature was inbred with the idea of the supernatural, so he refrained from argument, and said:

"It certainly is mysterious; but let us go on through the ruin. Perhaps we may find those who will meet our scimitars with scimitar."

"Yes, we will continue our search. Come."

Again Julian Delos led the way, and the two pressed on through the moonlit ruin—pressed on, until the moonlit dirge of the ever restless surf again smote their ears, as they neared the sea front.

Then the two suddenly halted—almost frozen in their tracks at the sight they beheld.

Half in the shadow of a crumbling archway, half in the streaming moonlight, lay the form of a man at full length.

By his side, her body bent, her head drooped over until the dark waves of her hair fell upon the prostrate form, and marble flooring, knelt a maiden—so overwhelmed with the anguish clutching at her heart that she failed to hear the approach of strangers.

For some moments, and in silence, the two men stood regarding her. Before them was another mystery which the old ruin had revealed.

Yet, in their thoughts, they knew that before them lay he whom they had seen fall before the attack of an enemy; but that enemy was a tall and powerful man—their glasses had plainly revealed this much; who then was this maiden?

At length, as a shudder shook the fair form, and a low moan broke from the lips, Julian Delos said softly in the language of the Greek:

"Lady!"

With a bound the maiden was upon her feet, her eyes flashing fire, her form drawn to its full height, and her hand upon a jeweled dagger in her sash, while her whole attitude was that of one who would dare punish the impious man who had thus intruded upon the sanctity of her grief.

CHAPTER XIII.

PAUL MALVERN'S ENCOUNTER.

FOR full an instant the surprised and startled maiden stood, facing those who had thus interrupted her grief, and the streaming moonlight displayed her superb form, beautiful face and antagonistic attitude to perfection.

"Pardon, lady. We meant not to intrude on your sorrow. Do you mourn for the dead?" and the voice of Julian Delos was strangely soft and sympathetic—softer than Paul had ever heard it before.

"Yes, signor, I mourn the dead—my father—struck down by the hand of an assassin; but he shall rue that ever his scimitar was stained with the blood of El Estin."

"El Estin—the Cretan? Holy Heaven," and Julian Delos bounded forward and knelt beside the prostrate man.

"Yes, it is the noble friend of my youth. Lady, from my inmost heart I pity you. I came

hither to meet your father, and I find him dead! Oh! this is terrible," and the voice of the young Cretan trembled with emotion.

Before them, believing them strangers, Kaloolah, had been cold as marble, stern as a warrior; but now her fortitude broke down, and throwing herself upon the form of her slain father, she burst into a torrent of tears.

In silence Julian and Paul stood for a few moments, and then the former bent over and gently raised her up, saying softly:

"Lady, this is not a fitting place for you; your home is not far away; allow me to escort you thither, while my friend here calls my seamen to bear the body of your poor father; but, who has done this foul deed?"

Instantly the drooping form was raised, and the eyes flashed fire through the pearly dew-drops, while her face grew stern once more.

"One whom I will yet see die—a hated Turk."

"We saw the combat from the deck of our vessel; we hastened here fearing that some deed of violence had been done."

"You are Julian Delos?"

"Yes; how know you that, lady?"

"My father has for long years sought this spot at night; he came hither this afternoon, and here I sought him an hour since, for he has been strangely moody and mournful of late. I came and found him dying—dying from a blow from a Turk!"

"Do you mean his assassin, lady?"

"Yes, but I was in time to see him die, to hear his last words, and learn from his lips that a vessel was expected off this point, loaded with arms and stores for my countrymen in their struggle against the infidel. Also, he told me, that Julian Delos, an exile from Crete, would command the vessel, and you are Julian Delos?"

"I am, lady, and this is my friend—an American, Paul Malvern by name, and now an officer in the service of Crete; one who has already done noble work for our beloved island."

The eyes of Kaloolah turned quickly upon Paul. Before, she had scarcely noticed his presence, and she seemed struck with his splendid appearance, and extending her hand said with outspoken frankness:

"God bless you, signor, for your nobleness; let us be friends."

Paul grasped the tiny hand, and bent low, while he replied:

"I am honored, lady, by your friendship; but now let Captain Delos see you to your home, and I will bring the—your father."

"Thank you, signor, no; I will go with my poor father's body; nay, you must not be seen in this neighborhood; I will return to my home and bring servants to bear my poor, poor father thither."

"You are right, lady: our coming hither, is a matter for the greatest secrecy. We will remain concealed until after your servants have removed your father, then I would see you, for, as my friend El Estin is no more, I have no ally to aid me, and must seek some one else."

"Signor Delos, my father told me all. I will secure for you one who will bear to General Aztec the news of your arrival. In the meantime you can be unloading your vessel, and the stores are to be placed in this ruin, where none, not even a Turk, would intrude—see! At the base of this cliff your vessel can lie in safety, and be shielded from view at every point. Return to your vessel, and come hither within an hour, and I will meet you."

Kaloolah spoke with a business-like promptness that surprised both of her hearers, and then, waving her hand in adieu, she turned quickly, bent over and pressed a kiss upon the upturned, cold face of her dead father, and walked rapidly away.

"Malvern, I do not like to leave the dead here alone," said Julian, thoughtfully, as Kaloolah disappeared.

"No; I will remain, and when I hear the party returning for the body, I will conceal myself. In the meantime you can return to the schooner and get all ready for our work, which will take us until daylight."

"You are right. But I dislike to leave you. Remember this old ruin has a weird reputation far and wide. You know we ourselves believed—"

"Have no fears, captain. I dread the earthly more than the unearthly, I assure you. If I need aid, I will call you."

"Do so. I will at once tow the schooner in close to the cliff."

So saying, Julian walked rapidly away, and descended the path leading to the beach below, where he had left his boat.

For some moments Paul Malvern paced to and fro, and then pausing leant against the archway, at the base of which lay the dead Cretan.

Suddenly he started. A hollow, mocking laugh greeted his ears. It came from within the ruin.

Paul Malvern knew no fear—he held no superstition—yet he was strangely moved by that weird laughter.

But by an effort of his mighty will, nerving himself to meet any danger, he glided quickly into the deeper recesses of the ruin, and concealed himself behind a heavy column.

Hardly had he taken up his position, when there sprung into the moonlight a being so supernatural-looking, so startlingly human and inhuman that he was almost spell-bound.

It was a human form, he beheld at a glance; but so distorted, so deformed as to be more deserving to be classed with the brute creation.

The head was immense, and as black as ebony; the eyes sparkling like diamonds, and exceedingly small; the nose flat, the ears long, and the mouth ludicrously large, grinning and terrible.

The shoulders were broad, with a hump upon the back, and arms of wonderful length, armed with great claws, rather than hands.

The body was short, stout, and the legs crooked, it seemed.

This strange-looking being was clad in snow-white clothing, fitting his form closely, and his immense head was surmounted by a snowy turban.

As the moonlight fell upon him, Paul could readily discern all his remarkable peculiarities, for he was not ten paces from him and he was glad to see that he was apparently unarmed.

At once his decision was taken. He would make him prisoner, if in his power.

For an instant the strange being stood as still as a statue, and then his small eyes glittered as he turned them upon the moonlight.

Then from his huge mouth broke forth the same diabolical laughter which Paul had before heard.

Wildly he flung his arms about his head, and then began a dance in a slow monotonous step, keeping his eyes fixed upon the moon, and mouth-thing forth an unintelligible chant, in time with the movements of his hands and feet.

Preparing himself for the contest, bring it what it might, Paul bounded like a tiger from his lair, and seized the frightened being ere he could dart away.

But once in the clutch of his enemy, the strange creature uttered a cry of commingled rage and terror, and threw his arms with herculean strength around Paul, who was surprised at his wondrous strength.

A powerful man himself, and one who had seldom met his equal, Paul Malvern felt that he was a mere child in the hands of his huge adversary, who hurled him to the ground with stunning force, placed his bony knee upon his breast, and drew from beneath the folds of his white jacket a long, glittering knife.

The eyes of the strange creature were now aflame with fury; his white teeth gritted together savagely, and froth was upon his dark lips. He was a very picture of a maddened devil, and Paul Malvern felt that his life hung in a slender balance. Did he not at once take the life of his deformed antagonist, he knew that he must himself die, and within the moment.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

WHEN a man's life is in deep peril, the brain becomes startlingly active, and one thinks with lightning rapidity, not only recalling vividly the scenes of a past life, but also taking advantage of every means of warding off the death-blow, and at the same time casting one look into the uncertain future—a glance of wonder as to where the soul will take its flight, if it should be torn ruthlessly from its earthly casket.

Thus it was with Paul Malvern.

He had been in deadly danger many times in life, and death he did not fear; still, such a death had horrors for him that none others could, and he exerted his enormous strength to its utmost to hurl from him his demoniacal adversary.

But he was in the hands of a giant—one who knew his own power, and, as if reveling in his desire to kill, the deformed creature kept his knees upon his fallen enemy, while he held the gleaming knife aloft, preparing to let it descend in search of life.

Paul thought rapidly; he felt that he could not free himself from the clutch of his foe; he knew that he had been the assailant, and he did not wish to take the life of the strange being.

In his sash was his revolver, and his hand was upon the butt; yet he did not wish to startle the silence of that old ruin, and perhaps draw attention to it by a pistol-shot.

Still, he must act, for he felt that his antagonist was only gloating over his power to kill him—enjoying the prelude of what he intended making a deadly performance.

Yet he would make one more trial—he would speak to him—endeavor to bring him to terms. Speaking in the Greek tongue, which he knew passably well, he said:

"Why seek you my life?"

Had he commanded the being to slay him, his words could not have had greater effect.

A hoarse yell broke from the frothing lips, the knife whirled round and round his head, and the eyes, preparatory to the blow, dropped upon the broad breast of Paul.

Then the gleaming blade descended; there was a quick movement of Paul's arm, a giant effort of his body, a flash, a ringing, startling report, a yell infernal, a heavy thud, and a man staggered to his feet.

It was Paul Malvern, and his adversary lay dead upon the grass-grown marble flooring, the knife still clutched in the huge claw-like hands.

"My God! I was on the threshold of death. Who can this strange creature be—ha! he is the spirit of this ruin—some poor, deformed being, who has sought a refuge here. Yes, he is the blind phantom that haunted this ruin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Paul Malvern started, for a ringing, wild laugh broke the stillness, and glancing quickly in the direction from whence had come the sound, he beheld a slender form, clad in white, and with a misty veil enveloping the features.

"By Heaven I will solve this mystery," and Paul sprung forward in the direction of the newcomer who had so strangely confronted him.

But a fallen column obstructed his way, and when he had sped around it and gained the spot where the spectral form had stood—it was gone!

In vain he searched through the ruin, traversing an acre of its weed-grown halls, and moss-covered chambers; nowhere could he discern a sign of the seeming phantom, and with a feeling of creeping awe, he again sought the spot where the deformed Ethiopian lay, for his black skin and features bespoke him as of that race.

With almost a start of horror, Paul stopped suddenly; the spot was vacant where he had left his late adversary!

Upon the marble floor a pool of blood was visible, slowly soaking into the crevices between the slabs; but this was all to mark his late terrible encounter with a creature that seemed hardly of the earth.

With strange emotions he stood in silence gazing upon the spot.

"Could Delos have come while I was searching the ruin, and removed the body? No, he would have called to me.

"If these are not spirits that haunt this ruin, then they are most mysterious creatures. I will go to the land side of the structure, and see if I can hear the Cretan maiden returning. Perhaps she can explain regarding the monster I was forced to slay."

So saying Paul glided through the ruin and soon stood in the moonlight facing the hill.

A few moments only had he stood there when he beheld a form approaching through the orange grove.

A closer look proved that it was Kaloolah—but she was alone.

"She has come on ahead of the servants to give way to her grief once more alone," he said, and withdrew into the ruin, yet still watching her as she wound her way, with bowed head and slow step, along the pathway leading to the sea front of the structure.

A moment after she disappeared around the corner of the crumbling pile, and then the air was filled with one long, loud, piercing shriek from her lips Paul well knew.

With the speed of a deer he bounded through the ruin, springing nimbly over fallen columns and sunken floors, and with dread at his heart, of impending evil to the maiden, he dashed through the archway, where first he had beheld her.

There upon the marble pavement dead, or in a swoon, lay Kaloolah, her face pressed against the ground, her arms outstretched above her head.

Placing the handle of his dirk to his lips he blew one loud, shrill call, and stooping over raised her gently in his arms.

"Thank God! she is not dead. She has received some terrible fright and swooned away. I wish I had joined her when I saw that she was alone. There is the answer from Delos; he will soon be here," and as he spoke a shrill whistle was heard in the distance.

Placing Kaloolah in as comfortable position as possible, Paul began to chafe her hands, and gently rub her forehead, and in a few moments was rejoiced to see that she was slowly recovering consciousness.

In a few moments the form quivered convulsively, and the lips parted.

Taking from his jacket a flask of liquor Paul poured a little into the open lips; soon the face flushed, the beautiful eyes opened and then fixed themselves upon the face of the young man, with a strange stare.

"Lady, you are with friends—have no fear," he said, gently.

"Where am I?"

"You returned to the ruin—and alone; I heard you cry, and came hither; the Senor Delos will soon be here."

Kaloolah covered her face with her hands, and then said, in mournful tones:

"My father! oh! my poor father! where is he, signor?"

"He is dead, you remember, lady?"

"Dead! Yes, I know that he is dead—that I am a poor, friendless orphan; but why did you take him away?"

"Take him away, lady? he lies where you left him!"

Instantly Kaloolah freed herself from the support of Paul and sprung to her feet.

"You would deceive me, signor. He is not there—see!"

Paul Malvern turned quickly at her words, and gazed where she pointed.

She spoke the truth: the form of El Estin no longer lay upon the marble pavement.

CHAPTER XV.

ZULEIKAH FINDS A FRIEND.

THE real amazement depicted upon Paul's face at once convinced Kaloolah he had spoken the truth—that he knew not what had become of the body of her father.

"Forgive me, signor; I believed you had deceived me—that for some reason, you would keep from me, that you had removed him. Oh, God! where can his poor bleeding form be?"

"Lady, I am wholly at a loss to tell. Strange things have happened in this old ruin to-night, and—Ha! here comes the Signor Delos."

As Paul spoke Julian dashed up, breathless from his rapid run, and with drawn scimitar in hand.

Behind him came a scattered file of brave seamen, also ready to meet a foe, should any confront them.

"Malvern, what is it? I first heard a wild shriek, and then your call."

"I will tell you, signor; the body of El Estin has been mysteriously removed."

"Gone? It cannot be. You were here, and—"

"A part of the time. Lady Kaloolah returned alone, and it was her shriek brought me here from another part of the ruin. She found her father's body gone, and swooned away—thus I found her."

"There is some inexplicable mystery in all this; but, lady, where are your servants?" and Julian turned to Kaloolah, who had stood like one in a dream, gazing upon the blood-stained pavement.

"Neither commands, threats, entreaties or gold would force them hither—one man promised to come with the sunlight, and bear my poor father to his home; hence I came alone, and found his body gone."

Inexpressibly sad were the last words of the maiden, who seemed yet dazed by the mystery.

"Signor Delos, I said I was in another part of the ruin; I will now tell you why I went thither," and in a few words Paul made known to his horrified hearers all that had transpired since the departure of Kaloolah and Julian, being careful that the seamen should not hear him, for he feared that their superstitious natures once aroused they would refuse to enter the ruin.

With strange feelings Julian Delos heard of the strange adventures of his lieutenant, and then said:

"We must keep this from the men. Lady, I pledge myself to solve the mystery for you, and to restore to you the body of him you mourn, if in the power of man.

"But you will pardon me now, and not deem me unfeeling, if I ask your aid in the duty that called me hither—to get word to the Cretan forces of our presence here with arms."

Instantly Kaloolah's whole manner changed. She was no longer the sorrowing maiden, but the brave, noble woman, and she replied:

"Give your instructions to me, Signor Delos, and I will see that a faithful messenger bears them this night to General Aztec."

"And, signors, let this mystery remain unsolved to the outer world; it will the better aid our plans, and give to us a secure point at which to make landings on the island, for neither Cretan nor Turk will wish to hover about this old ruin."

The two men gazed upon the maiden with surprised admiration; her wonderful metamorphosis astonished and delighted them, and their admiration increased as she continued:

"I will return to my lonely home, and make known to my servants that the body of my father has been spirited away; this will the further add to their superstitious horror of this place; then I will see that a messenger goes at once to General Aztec."

"Lady, you are a noble ally. I trust to you these papers for the Cretan general; yet I have another favor to ask of you, and one which I feel that you will be glad to grant."

"What is it, Signor Delos? I grant it ere I know its purport."

"A thousand thanks. Do you know aught of my history?"

"Yes, much. All true Cretans feel for you and yours. I have long known of you as an exile, as one upon whom the ban of death rested."

"You know, then, that one of my kindred, a fair young maiden, was torn from her home months ago, by a cruel Turk, Al Sirat Pasha—"

The start of Kaloolah, the wild flashing of her eyes, attracted the attention of both Julian and Paul, and caused the former to say:

"Have I offended, lady?"

"Oh, no; I am listening, Signor Delos," and the words were strangely cold and stern to issue from lips so sweet.

"My kinswoman was torn from her home, her parents murdered, and her brother either slain or made prisoner, while she, poor girl, was hurried off to Constantinople, where she became the

inmate of Al Sirat's harem; but from her cruel captivity, her intended life of misery, she was rescued by my noble friend here—the Signor Malvern.

"Zuleikah, my beautiful cousin, is about your age, and, pardon, lady, as beautiful if such were possible, and I feel that you will be friends, for to your sweet care I would intrust her."

"Where is she, signor?"

"On board my vessel."

"I will at once seek her, and carry her with me to my home. We can gain entrance without any one seeing us, and her presence I need not explain to my servants. Come, signor, we will seek her at once, and then I must hasten, for the night flies, and your messenger to General Aztec must be off ere long."

In her new role, Kaloolah seemed to no longer dwell upon her own sorrows, and quickly led the way down the steep path that conducted them to the beach below.

Arriving at the shore, the party were soon on board the yacht, which had been moored in close to the cliff, which served as a rocky pier upon which the cargo could be easily discharged.

Entering the cabin, Kaloolah waited for no introduction, but went up to Zuleikah, and said, frankly:

"Come, you shall be as my sister—we are companions in sorrow together; the signor has told me all."

Zuleikah as frankly returned the greeting, and having prepared for her departure, the party of four left the yacht together, Julian leading the way with Kaloolah, and Paul following with the maiden whose beauty had won his heart.

Telling Lieutenant Stellos to at once commence unloading the schooner, and that he and Paul would soon return, Julian and his three companions set out for the home of Kaloolah.

After a walk of half a mile, the two young men halted, as they came in sight of a substantial country home, built of the dove-colored rock of the island, and embowered in a grove of myrtle and oleander trees.

There was an air of solidity and comfort about the place, with its wheat-fields stretching away to the right, and olive trees and fine old orchards to the left.

Over a rugged hilltop a silvery waterfall gleamed in the moonlight, and the roar of its waters broke pleasantly on the ear.

The house was of rambling structure, with court and turrets, and situated upon the brow of a slope, was sheltered by a high hill in its rear, while from the front a wide view of valley scenery and distant mountain could be obtained.

Such was the home of Kaloolah—a home now cast in deepest mourning, and whose chambers would no longer echo to the tread of its master—whose halls had once been lighted up by the presence of the false Alfarida.

"Here we must leave you," and Julian halted in the edge of a grove of olive trees.

Soon Paul and Zuleikah came up, and after a few words of parting, and a promise to meet the following night, the two maidens crept softly toward the house, in a window of which was visible a single light.

Watching them until they disappeared beneath the shadow of the building, Julian and Paul then retraced their way rapidly to the yacht.

It was now within an hour of midnight, and they were anxious to get the stores securely placed in the ruin so that, when morning broke, if necessary, the Silver Scimitar could put to sea.

They found that Lieutenant Stellos had not been idle, but had strewed the rocky pier with stores of all kinds.

Taking a score of men up the hill with him, Paul soon began to haul up the boxes and bales by means of ropes, and finding a secluded part of the ruin they were quickly secreted there.

Presently the clatter of hoofs broke the stillness, and ordering his men back into the shadow, Paul awaited the coming of the intruder, whoever he might be.

A horseman darted up a moment after, and glanced somewhat nervously around him.

He was well mounted, slight of form, and dressed in the Grecian costume, while a silken turban sheltered his head.

His face was strangely handsome, almost feminine in its beauty, while a black, silken mustache shaded his lip.

At his side hung a small yataghan, with a hilt of gold, and in his sash were a pair of pistols, gold-mounted.

Polished boots covered his feet, the tops coming up to his knee, and gauntlet gloves protecting his hands.

He sat his steed gracefully, and looked like some dandy cavalier.

Presently he drew a dirk from his breast, and placing the handle to his lips gave a shrill, short call.

Then Paul stepped from the ruin and greeted him. He knew that he was the courier sent by Kaloolah, for Julian had told him of the dirk, with its golden whistle in the hilt, to be

the messenger have as a means of signaling his arrival.

"The Lady Kaloolah bade me come hither," he said, in a quiet, pleasant voice, as Paul approached him.

"Yes; Captain Delos will soon be here. There he comes now."

As Paul spoke, Julian approached and saluted the horseman, who politely returned it.

Both officers were struck with his youthful, handsome appearance, yet there was a certain look about him that convinced them that he could be trusted.

"You will undertake to bear dispatches for me to General Aztec—so said the lady Kaloolah."

"I will, signor."

"Your name, please?"

"Kizil."

"Are you a Cretan, or Greek?"

"I am a Sfakiote."

"Indeed! Then you come of a fearless race. Your people are brave defenders of Crete."

The horseman bowed, but made no reply.

"It is a dangerous ride before you, and a long one."

"I fear not the danger. I can ride it in three hours."

"Here are the papers. They are addressed to General Aztec. See him in person, and say to him that by break of day I shall have my cargo safely stored in the old ruin; also, that I have two score of volunteers here for him."

The messenger received the papers, bowed farewell, and wheeling his horse shot away, like an arrow, on his perilous mission.

CHAPTER XVI.

KAZIL, THE SFAKIOTE.

LIKE the wind the Sfakiote courier flew along, over the rough Cretan roads, giving free rein to his swift steed; and seemingly bent only on reaching his destination.

Adown hillsides, through valleys, around jutting prominences, crowned with the rude and ancient guard towers of Romans and Turks, and slowly crumbling to decay—across some swiftly-flowing rivulet, and at length up the steep mountain side he wound his way, neither steed nor rider seeming to know fatigue.

At length he came suddenly upon several horsemen, leisurely descending the mountain side.

Who they were he knew not; but there was no time to halt, no time to turn, and urging his horse forward, he drew his scimitar, and in an instant was in their midst.

There was a clash of steel, a flash or two, the report of firearms, and the flying horseman bounded on, leaving the small party surprised at his boldness, and amazed at his escape.

"By Allah! seize him!" he heard, in the ringing tones of the leader, and as he cut his way through those who had confronted him, he had caught sight of the blue, lace-covered uniform and red fez of the Turk.

A glance behind him, and he beheld that one of the party lay dead in the road, while the remainder, four in number, were preparing to give chase.

Away he skurried, with the speed of a deer, un mindful of the shot fired after him, and the clatter of hoof in pursuit.

Although jaded by a long and rapid ride, his good horse held his own, until after a short chase the pursuers gave up their daring game.

A league further, and the horseman came upon a deep gorge in the mountains, and here he caught sight of a warlike scene—half a thousand camp-fires were visible dotting the valley, and around them lay at rest hundreds of brave soldiers—while the moonlight fell upon the white canvas walls of tents here and there, the head-quarters of the officers.

It was the camp of the Cretan army, and struck with admiration and surprise, the young courier reined in his steed and contemplated the warlike scene.

Then he urged his horse forward once more; but the steed was so suddenly hurled back upon his haunches, and two dark forms stood at his bit.

"Who comes?" cried a tall, wild-looking man, armed with a long gun and scimitar.

"I would see the General Aztec," replied the horseman, not at all disconcerted by his sudden halt.

The two men held a conversation for a moment, in a low tone, and one of them, still holding the rein of his steed, said quietly:

"I will lead you to him."

A ride of a mile further, and the soldier halted in front of a rude mountain hut, before which paced a sentinel.

"Dismount; the sentinel will conduct you to his brilliancy."

The Sfakiote obeyed, and a moment after was ushered into a small room, where sat several officers in the uniform of the struggling patriots of Crete.

"A messenger to see your brilliancy," said the sentinel, and Kazil was left alone with the commander of the Cretan forces in that portion of the island.

"Signor generalissimo, I bear important papers to you from the coast," and Kazil addressed an

officer of splendid physique, and dark, stern face, who turned his gaze upon him.

"Ha! say you so? Then you are welcome," and the general held forth his hand and received the sealed envelope addressed to him.

"God be praised, but this is good news! When did you leave the coast, signor?" and General Aztec turned his searching glance upon the youth.

"Three hours since, your highness."

"You are a hard rider. Did you meet with no molestation on your way?"

"A few miles back I came upon a party of five Turkish officers—one of them was a pasha, as I saw by his uniform—but I rode through them and escaped."

"By heaven! I wager my scimitar it was that bold Al Sirat himself; he is given to these lonely rides. One day he will be taken through his foolhardiness; but you are ill? You are as pale as death," and General Aztec sprang to the side of the youth.

"It is nothing, signor; my rapid ride unnerved me. Did you say that it was Al Sirat Pasha?" said Kazil, in strangely earnest tones.

"Yes, doubtless."

"Had I known that I could have killed him. I fired full in the face of the next man to him, and he dropped dead from his horse. Ah! that it had been Al Sirat!"

"You have doubtless some bitter cause for your dislike of Al Sirat?"

"I have—a bitter cause."

General Aztec gazed an instant into the handsome, determined face of the young Sfakiote, and said:

"Signor, you have done me good service to-night; are you attached to the Cretan service?"

"No, signor."

"Then I will make you a captain of staff."

"No, your highness; I deserve not, neither do I care for such an honor; I thank you from my heart; but I can serve my country better as I am. Have you any orders for Captain Delos, for I return immediately?"

"Your steed will not be able—"

"Yes, signor generalissimo, he will bear me back nearly as quickly as he brought me hither, and my duty calls me back."

"Say to Captain Delos that I will dispatch a force at once for the coast—that they will march until daybreak and camp at the old Metokhi monastery until dark, when they will push on for the coast—say to him that his coming is a Godsend, and that a warm welcome and high rank await him and his young American friend, of whom he speaks so highly in his dispatches; but you must have refreshments ere your return, and your horse attended to—nay, I will hear to nothing else," and calling a servant the kind-hearted general ordered that Kazil's steed should receive every attention and that refreshments must be set before the young man.

Then he read his dispatches to the attendant officers, who at once departed to detail a force to start for the coast.

Alone with the young messenger General Aztec again made him offers of promotion; but Kazil firmly, yet politely refused them, and, excepting that he was a Sfakiote, and in the service of El Estin, he could learn nothing regarding him.

"Ah! this is sad news that Captain Delos writes of my lamented friend El Estin—he was cruelly slain in a ruin, by whom no one knows." Kazil made no reply, but arose from the table, dashed off a glass of mellow Cretan wine, and signified his readiness to depart.

A few more words from General Aztec, another offer of rank, and mounting his steed the messenger sped away once more over the moonlit country, his eyes nervously watching the eastern sky, as if dreading to see it grow rosy before the approach of day.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TURKISH RAIDERS.

WORN out by the fatigue of the past night Zuleikah did not awaken at an early hour; but refreshed by her rest she soon made her toilet, and sat down to await the coming of Kaloolah.

Her room was large and comfortable, and a window gave her a grand view of the valley and mountain, and seating herself upon a silken divan, the maiden allowed her eyes to wander admiringly over the beautiful scenery, lit up by the rays of the morning sun.

Presently she heard the tread of hoofs, and a horseman dashed by the window and into the court, his steed covered with foam, and gaunt from a long, hard ride.

At a glance Zuleikah recognized the horseman she had seen flit by her window the night before and disappear in the olive grove toward the coast.

"It is the messenger of Kaloolah; now she will arise I hope, for I am anxious to know what has transpired during the hours that I have slept."

Again the maiden turned her face upon the scenery without the window; but it held no longer charm for her—she was nervous and ill at ease, and paced to and fro with anxious face.

Thus half an hour passed, and then the heavy

curtains were thrown aside and Kaloolah entered.

"Oh! I am so glad you have come," and Zuleikah threw herself into the arms of her fair young hostess.

Kaloolah returned the embrace warmly, and then the two sat down upon the divan.

"How haggard you look! Why, you have mourned all night," and Zuleikah gazed with sympathy into the pale, sad face of her companion.

"Yes, I had little rest; but let us not talk of myself. I have good news for you. My messenger has returned, and a Cretan force is now on its way to the coast. To-night the arms and stores will be removed from the ruin."

"This is indeed good news; but your messenger must have ridden rapidly to have returned this soon. Why, it is four leagues to the camp of the generalissimo, the Signor Malvern told me."

"Yes, he rode like the wind; but come, let us break our fast," and Kaloolah led the way into an adjoining chamber, where a table was spread out with hot coffee, *glyko**, an odoriferous stew of chicken, barley-cakes and bottles of the red Cretan wine—a breakfast palatable enough to tempt an anchorite.

A huge *mangal* of glowing coals gave a pleasant heat to the room, while to neutralize the gas and perfume the atmosphere strips of lemon-peel were laid upon them.

A middle-aged woman, from the class of peasantry, stood respectfully awaiting the maidens, and her dark eyes cast a searching glance at Zuleikah, as she entered, but otherwise she showed no surprise or curiosity at her presence there.

Both maidens seemed really hungry, and relished the meal greatly, after which they retired to another chamber for a confidential chat.

But hardly were they seated upon silken cushions, when the servant woman, who had waited upon them in the breakfast-room, rushed in, her face white with fear.

"Speak, Ellik! What is it?" cried Kaloolah, springing to her feet.

"The Turks! the Turks!" gasped the frightened woman.

As she spoke there were heard cries and hoof-strokes without, a few pistol-shots, and a score of Turkish cavalry, their purple plumes waving in the breeze, dashed around the house.

"Oh, holy Heaven! we are lost!" cried Zuleikah, and the blood fled from her face.

"There is no hope for us, I fear. My servants have fled like frightened sheep," replied Kaloolah, with remarkable self-possession.

Then came a stern order without, a heavy step upon the portal, and a plumed and uniformed Turkish officer entered the room.

Suddenly he started, as his eyes fell upon the two maidens, and then his eyes flashed, as he cried:

"By Allah! do I dream, or are you not the lady Zuleikah, whom I believed in my harem on the Bosphorus?"

Zuleikah could utter no reply. She beheld before her the man who, months before, had torn her ruthlessly from her home—the red-handed Turk, the cruel Al Sirat Pasha.

"Your silence answers. How in Allah's name you ever came hither I cannot guess; but I have you once again, my beauty; and fairest Kaloolah, I claim thy sweet self also."

With a cry of fury Kaloolah rushed upon the Turk, a gleaming dagger in her upraised hand, and with her whole strength, ere he could ward off the unexpected blow, drove it downward toward his heart.

But the steel shivered into atoms against a diamond crescent that glittered on his breast, and, foiled in her attempt at the life of the slayer of her father, Kaloolah covered her face with her hands, and sunk nerveless down beside Zuleikah, upon the silken cushions.

"Seize those two maidens, Balbak; but let no insult be offered to them, or harm befall them," and Al Sirat Pasha turned with pale, stern face toward an under officer who just then entered, followed by several soldiers.

As the Turkish officer stepped forward to obey, there was heard a loud cry without; several shots followed in rapid succession; a shriek of agony, a rushing of feet and the next instant a tall form bounded into the room, a scimitar in one hand, a smoking revolver in the other.

One cry of joy burst from the lips of Kaloolah and Zuleikah. Paul Malvern stood before them.

"Ha! whom have we here? Seize him! Bind the maidens, and away! He must have aid at hand, and 'twere death to be caught here!"

The voice of Al Sirat rung out sharp and stern, and expecting an attack without, he strode from the room, leaving his lieutenant and troopers to deal with the brave American.

With flashing eyes Paul sprang forward, and his scimitar crossed that of the Turkish officer, while a shot from his revolver sent a trooper to the floor.

A few hurried passes, a savage struggle, and the Turk was cut down, the scimitar of the American cleaving through his chest.

* Sweet jelly of strawberries.

But as Paul wrenched his blade loose, there was a deafening report in the room, and Kaloolah and Zuleikah beheld their brave preserver stagger and fall heavily to the floor.

Then they were rudely seized by the Turkish soldiers, and borne rapidly from the house, where they were handed up into the arms of two mounted troopers.

"Away, men, away!" rung out the order from the lips of Al Sirat Pasha, and the small cavalcade dashed off at full speed, leaving an officer and three men dead behind them—fallen by the hand of Paul Malvern.

One loud cry from Zuleikah, and the Turkish raiders swept from sight adown the road leading to the Moslem camp, ten leagues away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JULIAN DELOS MAKES A DISCOVERY.

WHEN the sun rose over the waters of the Mediterranean, its rays illumined brightly the old ruin on the hill, and penetrated deep into dark recesses, here and there hidden beneath fallen arches and columns.

In the basin below, a mere bowl of water it might be called, hardly half an acre in size, lay the Silver Scimitar, completely screened from the sea by projecting arms of the cliff, and as securely hidden as though in a forest.

But one man was visible upon her decks—a seaman crouched under the fore-castle, and alone keeping guard, while his shipmates, worn out by their arduous work of the past night, were sleeping below.

Presently the cabin companion-way was thrown open and Julian Delos came upon deck, and cast his eyes around him upon the precipitous sides of the basin.

"This is a snug harbor. Unless some one fell into it from the heights yonder, I do not think he could find it; but, no danger of stragglers there. That old ruin is avoided by Turk and Cretan alike. Well, Taras, you are on the alert, I see," and Julian walked forward to where the solitary sentinel was sitting.

"Yes, signor; the signor Malvern bade me tell you not to await breakfast for him."

"Why, where is he?"

"He left the vessel an hour since, signor. He said he was restless and could not sleep; he feared harm to the ladies, he said."

Julian Delos remained in silent surprise for a moment, and then ventured to the cabin.

A moment after he came again on deck armed with his scimitar and pistols.

"Taras, I am going to seek the signor. Should I miss him, say that I will be back soon, and, under no pretense allow any man to leave the schooner."

"Yes, signor."

Springing nimbly ashore upon the pier of natural rock, Julian hastened up the steep hillside and in five minutes stood in front of the ruin.

Before the tottering archway the marble pavement was stained with the blood of El Estin; within, the flooring was still damp with the blood of the singular being with whom Paul had had his fierce encounter.

But a stillness like death rested upon all; no phantom form glided about, no human being met the gaze of the young captain to greet him.

With the hours of night the grim mystery of the place had vanished, it would seem.

And yet, Julian Delos felt full well that the grand old pile had a fearful mystery; it concealed the body of El Estin, so strangely disappearing from where it had fallen; it held the hideous form of the one who had attacked Paul, it sheltered the weird phantom that had met his own eyes, and as well he knew, hid from human view the stores and arms that had the day before been in the hold of the Silver Scimitar.

Yet the ruin seemed as though its peaceful sanctity had never been disturbed.

A few moments of reverie, and Julian Delos wended his way swiftly down the hillside, disappearing in the orange grove, and taking the path leading toward the home of Kaloolah.

A walk of a few moments and he was startled by firing, and the cry of combatants.

"Ha! that's the rattle of Malvern's revolver! He is in trouble—oh! that I had a dozen of my men at my back!"

Julian bounded forward, and dashing from the shelter of the olive orchard and caral trees, he beheld the home of El Estin before him.

As his eyes fell upon the abode, there dashed out from the court a score of horsemen, following a tall, gorgeously-uniformed Turk, who was spurring away at full speed.

In the arms of two troopers he beheld Zuleikah and Kaloolah, and the sight caused him to stagger with the overwhelming emotion that rushed upon him.

But it was a momentary weakness, for he rushed forward with the speed of the wind, and the next instant dashed into the court of the homestead.

Here he was met by a dozen frightened, shrieking servants, who were too much terrified to more than cry out that the Turks would kill them.

"Oh, signor! my poor lady has gone, and the cruel Turks have slain your friend."

It was Ellik that spoke—the servant of Zulei-

kah, and with scared face and wild gesticulations she rushed up to Julian, for she recognized in his uniform one friendly to her mistress, as she had beheld how nobly Paul had defended the ladies, and the daughter of El Estin had explained to her confidential waiting woman, sufficient to let her know that poor Crete had friends near at hand.

"Dead! Paul Malvern dead! This is terrible! Where is he?"

Ellik beckoned to Julian to follow and dashed into the house, wending her way to the chamber where had occurred the deadly encounter.

On their way they sprung over the body of a dying Turk, and stooping down, the Cretan asked harshly:

"Who led this attack, Moslem? Speak, or I'll hasten your dying!"

The eyes of the Moslem slowly opened, and a shudder passed over his frame; with that shudder his lips moved. They uttered these words:

"Al Sirat Pasha."

"Perdition seize him! Zuleikah is again in his power, and the Lady Katoolah too! What force had he, Turk?"

But he addressed ears forever deaf; the Moslem was dead.

Springing to his feet, Julian followed Ellik once more, and the next moment stood in the chamber, where lay the form of Paul Malvern. He was upon his side, and his nerveless fingers were still around his scimitar hilt, while his revolver lay near him.

Here and there lay the dead forms of the Turkish *aide de camp* of Al Sirat, and the troopers who had fallen before the desperate attack of the American.

In an instant Julian Delos was by the side of Paul, his hand upon his heart.

"Thank God! he is not dead! He breathes! Where is he wounded? Great God! here in the head, and there can be no hope for him! No, Holy Heaven! I thank thee! The ball has glanced and only stunned him. Quick, woman, bring me water and bandages."

Ellik hastened to obey, and in a few moments Paul Malvern gave a long breath, his frame quivered, and then the eyes opened.

At a glance he seemed to recall all, and he cried:

"Thank God, you are here! Did you rescue them?"

"No, I came alone—just in time to see Al Sirat bear them off. How do you feel?"

Paul groaned in agony of spirit, not from physical suffering, and rising to his feet, he said:

"I feel well. I was wounded in the head, was I not? I felt the blow."

"Yes, the ball glanced; it was merely a flesh wound; but you need quiet for awhile."

"No; a headache is all that I suffer with. Where are your crew?"

"On the schooner. Taras told me you had gone off for a walk, and I followed you hither. Would that I had brought some of my men with me; but, who could have believed that Al Sirat would raid this far into our lines?"

"He is a bad man. Zuleikah and Kaloolah are in worse than deadly danger now; they must be rescued."

"And how?"

"That is to be seen. Let us ask this good woman to give us some refreshments, for I am very faint; then we must arrange some plan of action—we must save those two maidens from the horrible fate for which Al Sirat intends them."

"You are right, Malvern. I pledge my life to the noble duty," firmly replied the young Cretan conspirator, and he grasped the hand of the American; they were pledged to save Zuleikah and Kaloolah from a Turkish harem, or lose their lives in the attempt.

CHAPTER XIX.

MORE MYSTERY.

WHEN the moon again soared above the sea, and flung its silvery light upon the ruined temple, two men stood on the spot where El Estin had fought and fallen the night before.

Those two men were Julian Delos and Paul Malvern—the latter recovered fully from the stunning effects of his wound, for he had passed the day in quiet and rest.

Within the walls of the ruin stood two-score men—quietly awaiting an order from their commander.

Presently there came the sound of tramping feet, and from the depths of the orange grove filed out a line of horsemen.

Instantly the little band in the ruin were in readiness to greet either friend or foe. The former were those now coming, for the moonlight fell upon the Cretan uniform—not that of the hated Turk.

Advancing from their place of concealment, Julian and Paul at once confronted the Cretan commander—a handsome officer of thirty-five, perhaps, with a stern, fearless face—a patient heart and soul, and one who had already done good service in behalf of struggling Crete.

At a glance Julian recognized him. He was, alike with himself, a sufferer from Turkish tyranny, and had been exiled from his native

land, and found a home in England, where Captain Delos had met him.

"Colonel Iturbide, I am truly glad to meet you. When last we met it was in London; now we uphold together our down-trodden flag. God grant it victory over the star and the crescent."

Colonel Iturbide grasped Julian's hand most warmly, and then glanced toward Paul, when Julian continued:

"This is my friend, Lieutenant Malvern—an American who has cast his sword in our struggle, and already aided us greatly."

"I am glad to meet your brave American friend. Signor Malvern, I hear you a commission of *bey* from General Aztec; that is, if you desire to see service on land; and to you, Captain Delos, an equal rank, if you prefer the army."

"It is kind of the general; but, at present, we have a duty to perform to which we are pledged; after that it is my intention, and I may add also the intention of Signor Malvern, to return to Crete and aid in its defense. That duty, let me say, Iturbide Bey, is to rescue from the cruel hands of Al Sirat Pasha, my cousin, the Lady Zuleikah, and the Lady Kaloolah, the daughter of El Estin."

"What! has that Moslem torn from their homes the ladies you refer to? I knew of the death of El Estin, through your courier from the coast last night; but of the abduction of his beautiful daughter I had not heard," and Iturbide Bey spoke with angry vehemence and flashing eyes.

In a few words Julian then made known the circumstances of his, or rather Paul's, rescue of Zuleikah from the harem on the Bosphorus, the mysterious combat on the cliff, the death of El Estin, and other remarkable incidents of the past night, not forgetting the attack of the Turkish raiders on the homestead, and their abduction of the two maidens.

"Now," he continued, "it is our intention to go into the Turkish lines, find trace of the maidens, and follow them to Constantinople, if Al Sirat has sent them thither. My vessel will sail, under my faithful lieutenant, the Signor Stellos, to the island of Scarpanto to the eastward, and make that its rendezvous, though touching at this point one night in every ten days—hence, if we escape from the Turkish lines, we can come hither and remain until the arrival of the Silver Scimitar. If we go to Constantinople we can charter a tartan and run down the archipelago to Scarpanto, and then sail for England, where it is my intention to leave Zuleikah and the Lady Kaloolah."

"Then with another cargo of arms and supplies we will come to Crete and throw our swords in line with your own. Please make these explanations to the general."

"I will, Delos, and I honor your intention of rescuing your kinswoman and the Lady Kaloolah from the power of Al Sirat. You have already served Crete nobly in what you and your noble friend have done; but you run a terrible risk—your lives are worthless if discovered."

"Well we know that; but now to work. How many men have you with you?"

"Three hundred, and plenty of means of transportation."

"Good! Now let us set to work."

For two hours the work of unloading the uncouth vehicles and packing the asses and steeds went swiftly and busily on, and then the head of the transportation column filed from the ruin, and wound into the orange grove on its return.

Farewells were then spoken—a warm pressure of the hands of Julian and Paul, and Iturbide Bey mounted his steed and fell in with the rear guard of his force, and which was composed of the volunteers brought in the Silver Scimitar.

For some moments the two friends remained silently gazing after the retiring column, and then Julian said:

"Come, we must be off."

"Yes, there is no time to lose; but I would that we could solve the mystery of this old ruin—ha!" and Paul bounded away, and disappeared in the deep recesses of the crumbling temple. Quickly Julian followed him.

Paul Malvern was standing in an open court, a puzzled expression upon his face—his scimitar in one hand, his revolver in the other.

"Signor, as I spoke a while since, I glanced back into this ruin; I saw the same misty, phantom-like being we beheld the night before—aye, and the hideous, deformed creature that I attacked, and killed."

"Holy Heaven! did you behold him, too?"

"Yes."

"Are you certain that you killed him? Remember how his body disappeared."

"Yes; but El Estin was dead—a sword-thrust was in his side—yet, his body disappeared."

"Yes, I shot the creature through the head; I saw the wound it made; it was not a glancing shot, as was the one the Turk gave me; it was he whom I killed—or—"

"Or what, Malvern?"

"His counterpart."

"Say rather his spirit," replied the Cretan.

* Bey, a rank equal to that of colonel.

his superstitious nature again exerting control of his sound sense.

For a moment Paul made no reply; then he said, thoughtfully:

"I would that we could solve this mystery ere we go."

"Ha, ha, ha," broke in ringing, wild, demoniacal laughter through the ruin, and in a hoarse, deep basso came an echo:

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Come, Malvern; this is tempting Providence too far. None yet have solved the mystery of the grave. Come."

"I will yet solve this diabolical mystery, if God spares my life to return hither," muttered Paul, and the friends walked slowly from the ruin.

Half an hour after the Silver Scimitar slowly glided seaward, and left behind the haunted ruin in the ill-fated land of Crete.

CHAPTER XX.

IN DEADLY DANGER.

As the Silver Scimitar glided swiftly seaward, two dark forms ascended the steep hillside, and wended their way slowly in the direction of the orange grove, in whose depths they now disappeared.

Ten minutes after they were cautiously approaching the homestead of El Estin, in which was visible a single light.

A knock upon the outer portal brought a response from within.

"Who comes?"

"Friends of El Estin, and the lady Kaloolah," replied one of the men, who, in spite of his disguise as a Cretan peasant, was recognizable as Julian Delos, as was also Paul Malvern, who was similarly attired.

"We do not know who are friends now," was the cautious reply.

"Ellik, I know your voice. We are those who were here this morning."

The door opened and the waiting woman Ellik stood before them.

"We are pledged to save the lady Kaloolah and her fair friend. We need horses to start at once for the Turkish lines. Are there steeds in the stable of El Estin?"

"There are, signor—I will go with you. In these troublous times it is best only to trust those whom you know; but, signor, you run a terrible risk to venture into the Turkish lines. Your lives will be the forfeit."

"We must risk that. Yes, these are good animals," and Julian turned the light of a lantern upon several steeds, who stood in their stalls, for Ellik had at once led the way to the stable.

A few moments more and the young conspirators were mounted, and dashing swiftly along the moonlit highway leading toward the Turkish lines.

When the sun rose they were in the immediate neighborhood of the Turkish outposts, and not desiring to attract attention, they rode into a small hamlet, and sought shelter for the day.

The house at which they stopped was the ruin of what had once been a large and comfortable home, but the present owner was of the lower order, and was content to share it in companionship with his horse, cattle and chickens.

The brute creation inhabited one part of the building, roaming at will through large halls and chambers that had once been the scene of many a gay gathering of gallant men and fair ladies.

The family inhabited four rooms in a wing, sheltered by a spur of an overhanging mountain, and consisted of a Cretan wine-grower, his wife, and four children of tender years.

Ellik had directed them thither as friends of the cause of Crete, though a pressure of circumstances had made them adopt the creed of the Mohammedan and of the Turk.

To their inquiry if they could get rest and food for themselves and horses, the host replied that he kept no inn, and in those stirring times one might entertain an enemy unawares.

"And an angel, too. Here, my good friend," and Julian forced into his hands several piastres of gold, while he continued:

"Know you one Ellik—the serving-woman of El Estin?"

"Well do we know her," replied the wife of the Cretan, and the gold at once seemed to draw them toward the travelers with that magnetic power which it invariably possesses.

"Well, it was Ellik that made me come hither, and inquire for the wine-grower Anthropon."

Instantly the man's manner became more friendly, and both he and his wife exclaimed:

"*Kalos orizete!*" (welcome.)

Julian and Paul then rode into the walled court, dismounted, and the host led their horses away to give them food, while the hostess ushered them into her best room, and in a short while set before them a most tempting meal of pillau, wild fennel stewed in oil, kid with eggs, spinach, and a bottle of red wine of Crete, made from the grapes grown by Anthropon himself.

After a hearty repast the young adventurers threw themselves down to seek repose, which

they sadly needed, and notwithstanding their anxiety of mind regarding the maidens, and their own peril, they were soon lost in deep slumber.

When Paul awoke at length, the day was far spent, and he turned to awaken Julian.

To his surprise he was not there; his bed was vacant!

Arising, Paul sought his host, but found the hostess, who told him that Julian had arisen an hour before, and had gone forth with her husband—she could not tell him whither.

While Paul was wondering where Julian could have gone, Anthropon suddenly burst into the house, his face white with fear.

"Oh, friend! the Turks are coming. They are searching every house in the village."

"And Julian—what of him?" cried Paul, springing to his feet.

"They have captured him. They came upon us unawares, and though he shot down two Moslems, they seized and bound him. It is the command of Al Sirat Pasha, and they are devils."

"Julian a prisoner? My God! this is awful news you bear; but tell me, why did he leave this house?"

"He found out that I was at heart a true Cretan, and went with me to see the *Hegoumenos* (abbot), who is a friend of Crete, and there I learned, *e eugeneia sas* (your nobility), that you were not humble peasants."

Paul knew, as soon as he heard the respectful salutation of *e eugeneia sas* applied to him, that Anthropon doubtless knew him in his own character, either from words that had fallen between Julian and the *Hegoumenos*, or what had been told him, so he replied:

"And you saw the signor captured?"

"Yes, your nobility—after he had slain two Moslems. He cried to me to tell you to seek him either in Khania or Suda—for thither he would be taken; then I fled hither to warn your brilliancy."

Paul hesitated in deep thought. Without, he heard the clatter of hoofs, the cries of the frightened villagers, the stern voices of the Turkish troopers, with occasionally a shriek of agony, and a pistol-shot, as some one fell beneath the cruel blow of a Moslem soldier.

"And where am I to go?"

The Cretan shrugged his shoulders: he was rapidly losing his nerve.

He wanted to aid Paul; he loved his island country and its cause; but he loved *self* more, and he did not wish Paul to be found in his house.

But what was to be done?

The Turks were charging about the village streets, and every instant he expected a summons to open his door—or that, worse still, the door would be broken.

"Is there no place I can hide? It would be madness to ride out now," calmly said Paul.

"No; a Turk would find you anywhere," groaned Anthropon.

Then there came a blow upon the outer portal, and a stern voice demanded:

"Open! in the name of his highness, the sultan."

Anthropon was in abject terror; but, as is usual with women in position of direct danger and need of nerve, his wife sprung to the rescue, crying:

"The spring! the spring!"

"What spring—is it where I can seek concealment?" asked Paul, quickly.

"Yes, come," and the woman darted away into the stabling portion of the house, just as another stern summons was heard at the door.

In the center of a rock-bound chamber, was a kind of shallow well, dug out of the solid stone.

It was about four feet square, and as many deep—and full of water, which bubbled up in a generous stream, and found its way out through a natural canal, or tunnel, apparently leading under the rocky hill that sheltered the dilapidated homestead.

The tunnel was not more than two feet in diameter, and was half filled up by the stream of water.

"There—there is your only chance—jump into the spring and go into the tunnel," said the woman.

"And whither does it lead?"

"Under the mountain, and comes out a mile away."

Paul shuddered, in spite of himself, and then said:

"Did any one ever pass through this tunnel?"

"Five years ago my first-born, a boy of four years, fell into the spring and was carried through—but he was dead when we found him at the other side of the mountain."

"Doubtless," said Paul, dryly.

"And this is all that has gone through?"

"A bucket now and then, dropped in by the children."

"How large a bucket?"

"Like this," and the woman pointed to a wooden bucket about fifteen inches in height, and a foot in diameter.

"The chances are desperate; but I will take them; to meet yonder Turks is certain death."

Paul spoke calmly; but his face was very pale, his lips stern set; he was flying from one dan-

ger to face another, one that was terrible indeed.

As he spoke he bade the woman farewell, and sprung into the spring, and the swiftly-bubbling stream forced him at once into the dark tunnel.

He went head first, and his body filled up the space not occupied by the water.

As he disappeared in the tunnel, he heard the cries of his enemies behind him. Then came a sudden splash in the spring, and he believed he had been discovered. No, it was the woman, who, with great presence of mind, had plunged the bucket into the water, to prevent the disturbance of the water from being noticed by the Turks.

Then the hum of voices died away; the strong current forced him on, in spite of his effort to hold himself stationary, by pressing against the slimy sides. Around him all was gloom; behind and before him lay deadly peril.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ETERNITY IN A MOMENT.

WHEN Paul Malvern found that it was impossible to check his progress—that, in spite of his most violent efforts, the stream swept him on, he gave up all hope of retracing his way to the spring—a means by which he had hoped to escape.

Then he set to work to protect himself as well as he could from a blow from some jagged corner, or projection of the narrow tunnel, well knowing that if he escaped, it must be through that long, dismal, fearful mile of underground—beneath the very base of the mountain.

Placing his hands above his head to shelter it, and extending his elbows upon either side until they dragged against the slimy walls, he stretched out his feet behind him, and was thus borne onward at a swift rate, his shoulders above water.

How long he had been thus dashing on he knew not; but it seemed to him that he must have traveled miles and miles—that hours must have gone by since he had left the spring, and the dread crept upon him, almost stilling his heart, and freezing his blood, that perhaps he had missed the direct channel under the mountain, and was being borne onward, onward, and downward into the very bottomless pit of the island—some huge underground cavern that must be his tomb, and from whence the streams only sped upward to break through the bottom of the sea.

The thought was maddening—worse than death, and a cold sweat broke out all over him, notwithstanding the icy coldness of the water.

Presently his hands struck against an obstruction—his progress was checked—for he was suddenly forced into a narrow aperture.

With herculean strength he endeavored to force his way forward—but his stalwart frame closed up the aperture, and behind him arose the waters—higher and higher, until they covered his head.

His own body, his splendid physique, broad shoulders and breast, so admired by women, and envied by men, were proving his own ruin—they were damming up the tunnel and he must die there—die a most horrible death.

The thought was maddening agony, and with a gigantic effort, and a writhing of his whole frame, he forced himself through, the act tearing his clothes half from his back.

And just in time, the mighty struggle, for his breath was almost gone, the water had been long above his head.

With air once more, and motion, he felt greatly relieved, and skurried along on the bosom of the flowing stream.

But around him all was gloomy darkness—the rushing waters and his own hard-drawn breath the sounds that alone greeted his ears.

He was buried beneath a mountain—he was in a gigantic tomb.

Without the birds sang merrily, the mountains and valleys basked in the sunshine, and all was bright and beautiful.

Within all was desperate darkness and despair.

"I would meet a hundred Turks rather than face death this way; I would rather die in brave combat than live by another effort to save life by such a way," he thought.

On, on he still swept, and to him hours went by; miles were cast behind, and still no light ahead.

"Oh, God! has this no ending? Am I doomed to drift on here through eternity?" he cried.

But no answer came to his cry; he still drifted on.

Then his breath became quick and short—a mountain of weight seemed resting upon his chest, and he felt that his strength, his senses were failing him—that he was dying, or going mad.

Then before him glimmered a faint light. Was it a hallucination of his frenzied brain?

No, it was light—the bright light of day.

Then the tunnel widened; the water shallowed, and he sped along on hands and knees—sped on toward the light ahead.

With joy in his heart, with thrills of delight in his brain, he was borne along—along; until he was suddenly forced into the daylight, in the

mouth of a large cavern—suddenly swept on, until, only by a tremendous exertion, did he save himself from being hurled over a cataract half a hundred feet, with the volume of water, which, fed by other springs, dashed down the mountain side.

Below him lay a peaceful-looking valley, here and there dotted with villages and homes, and all lighted up by the glorious sun, which was now near its setting.

This much he saw; he beheld that he was free from his fearful danger—that he had safely passed through the tunnel—passed out from the shadow of death into the joy of life, and his lips moved—his face flushed, and a long, loud, piercing cry broke from him.

With that cry of joy he staggered backward—tattered toward a mossy bank, and fell upon it his full length.

His superhuman exertions, his agony of suspense, and then the revolution from death to life, had overcome him, and he swooned away.

CHAPTER XXII.

RUNNING THE GANTLET.

WHEN Paul Malvern returned to consciousness, after the terrible ordeal through which he had passed, he found that the sun had set, and darkness was upon the earth.

But over the distant hills loomed the moon, in silvery splendor, and the rising of this luminary gave him an idea of the time; it told him that he had lain in a swoon for several hours, and then he knew that the eternity of time he had experienced when in the tunnel could not have been, in reality, more than a few moments, but to him it was indeed an eternity.

Rising to his feet, he found himself cold, stiff, and weak; but he must make some effort to save himself. He was still in danger should the Turks be in the neighborhood.

At length he determined to go back to the Cretan's home and there get aid and food, for he needed both.

As he turned to discover which direction he should take, the moonlight cast a shadow across his path.

Weakened by what he had gone through, Paul felt in no humor to meet a foe; but his indomitable courage made him at once face the intruder, and prepare for a struggle, if struggle there must be.

"Ah, signor, I am so glad you are safe. You escaped, then, through the tunnel?" and Anthropon threw himself forward, and grasped Paul's hand.

"Yes, I escaped through the tunnel; but were it to do over I would rather choose death; but the Turks!"

"They were driven off by a squadron of Sfakiote horsemen, and the fight in our village was a hot one while it lasted. Both Turks and Cretans have now gone, and I came in search of you, hardly expecting to find you alive. Come, your nobility, come with me to my house, where your horse and equipments are."

Paul eagerly accepted the invitation, and after a long walk around the mountain's base, they reached the hamlet, and the wife of Anthropon was delighted to welcome him.

Some dry clothes were then given him, a hearty meal prepared, after partaking of which he threw himself down to rest.

At midnight he was awakened, according to his request, by Anthropon, and dressing himself once more in his own clothing, which the good housewife had dried for him, he again partook of food, and slipping a gold souvenir into the hands of the woman, mounted his horse, and rode from the court, having determined to pass through the Turkish lines under cover of the darkness.

Mounted upon the steed ridden there by Julian Delos, Anthropon led the way as guide, and at a rapid gallop, they started upon the perilous duty of evading the sharp-eyed Turks.

A ride of an hour brought them to a small hamlet, nestled against the mountain side, and this, Anthropon said, was only a mile from the Moslem outposts.

The hamlet seemed buried in the deepest slumber, for not a human being was visible, and the moonlight lit up the deserted streets as bright as day.

Slowly they rode along, their horses' hoofs making loud echoes in the reigning stillness.

At length the Cretan halted and said:

"Here, signor, I must leave you. The road is straight to the town, and the outposts are only on highways. Good fortune attend you. By the Prophet, see there!"

Paul glanced quickly before him—a line of Turkish soldiery, a dozen in number, had silently glided across the road, stretching from one side of the street to the other.

"Come, Cretan, we must charge through them!" and Paul settled himself in his saddle, gathered his reins well in hand, and drew from beneath his loose robe his trusty scimitar.

Then, with a yell of defiance, a rattling of his revolver, he dashed forward at full speed.

There was a wavering of the Turkish line, evidently taken by surprise, and then a few scattering shots.

The next instant Paul was in their midst; a trio of gleaming bayonets were ward off with

his whirling scimitar, which then fell mercilessly upon the head of a bald Turk, and with a bound high in the air, the faithful steed cleared his foes and flew on like the wind.

Once through the line, Paul turned to look for the Cretan.

He was not visible. Could he have fallen?

No, for down the street he beheld a flying steed and rider—flying for dear life. The Cretan had charged in the other direction!

"It is better so. Come, old fellow, you must not tarry," and Paul urged his good horse onward at the top of his speed.

But the flying feet of the animal slackened their pace; he staggered, yet struggled on; reeled, bounded once more gallantly forward, and then fell in a heap on the earth.

Paul was shaken up considerably, yet not injured by the fall, and hastily freeing himself from the dying steed, he sprang to his feet and darted along the highway, until he came to a grove of carab trees, into which he darted for shelter.

Still he pressed rapidly onward, until, after an hour's walk, he came upon an old ruin.

Quickly he stole into the deep shadow, and here halted to rest, for he had been moving at a very rapid pace.

For some moments he stood in silence, gazing over the moonlit scene around him, and then his ears caught a low, humming sound.

He was on the alert at once, and distinctly caught the words of a Turkish song he had often heard before.

Creeping stealthily forward he peered through a crumbling embrasure of the ruin, for it was evidently an old Venetian fortress in which he found himself.

Below him lay the broad highway leading to Rhithymnas, the minarets and sheltering palm trees of which could be seen in the distance.

Paul now knew that he was within the Turkish lines, and therefore he must act with the greatest caution.

At first he did not catch sight of the singer, whose low voice was yet heard; but, after awhile, a form advanced into the broad moonlight.

It was a Turkish sentinel—a young, handsome fellow, dressed in the uniform of a trooper, and, with his purple plume, decidedly an attractive-looking soldier—one to win a fair maiden's heart.

He was armed with pistols, and carried a bare scimitar across his arm, as if ready for instant use.

Presently he began to pace to and fro across the highway, which was a hard, paved road, the only respectable carriage-way that Paul had seen in Crete.

"I must get the countersign from that sentinel; but how?"

This was the question that puzzled Paul not a little.

After awhile he continued:

"Were he a Christian soldier, I might perhaps spring upon him, and frighten him into giving me the word under fear of death; but, that game won't do to play on a Mahomedan, heathen though we call them; he would consign his soul to Allah, and die as mutely as an infant dropping off to sleep. Then, after my terrible experience in the tunnel, and my long run to-night, I might not be able to overpower the Moslem so easily. Ha! yonder is his horse," and Paul caught sight of a waiting steed, hitched to a projection of the dove-colored limestone through which the road was cut.

For some moments the young American sat in meditation—racking his fertile brain to devise some means of action.

Then his face lighted suddenly, and he cautiously crept back the way he had come.

Twenty minutes after a tall form advanced slowly up the highway, coming from the direction of Rhithymnas.

It was Paul Malvern, who had made a flank movement upon the sentinel.

With firm, yet light step, he advanced, momentarily expecting a challenge from the guard.

But, none came, and Paul continued to advance, until he stood in front of the Turk.

Then the secret was out; the sentinel had sung himself to sleep, and was leaning against the wall of *palambino*, his closed eyes turned full up at the moon—the last object that had evidently met his sleepy vision. The young guard was evidently in love, and his dream of anticipation, when he would again meet his fair *dulcinea*, had lulled him to slumber.

"Turk, you keep poor watch."

The sentinel started; his eyes opened, and he awakened to act; but a revolver muzzle covered his heart, and a stern voice commanded:

"You are in my power. One word, one move and you die."

The Turk made no reply, but his eyes glared fiercely, and his whole frame trembled while Paul continued:

"To be caught asleep on your post is punishable with death; but I will spare you this once—"

"And who are you, signor?" asked the Turk, a certain air about his unknown captor commanding respect.

"I am one who is on secret service. I dare

tell you this, because I know that you will not report it. I am on secret service for my ruler, and my duty is to see that the subjects of the sultan, officers and men alike, are on the alert to serve our august master. Do you know the private signet of the sultan?"

"Yes, your highness; it is a gold star, a silver crescent set in a red field," replied the Turk, now confident that he was talking to one high in authority, in spite of the coarse garb of a peasant that he wore.

"Behold it!" and Paul extended his hand bearing the secret signet.

The Turk at once dropped on his knees, crying:

"Mercy, mercy, oh! most excellent highness."

"Arise, sir; I would send you into Rhithymnas—no, I will go myself. What gate did you come hither through?"

"The one on this highway, your highness."

"And the password on this road is—"

"Abdul Aziz, your highness."

"I did not ask you for the password; you are too glib with your speech, trooper. I say the password is—given you to allow no enemy to pass into the town?"

"Yes, your highness."

"And yet I found you asleep. I could have killed you as you slept."

"Mercy, my lord."

"Yes, I will be merciful; but, see that you do your duty henceforth, and, sentinel, if I hear that you breathe one word of this night's meeting, or of my presence here, it will be the worse for you."

"I will seal my lips, your highness."

"See that you do."

So saying Paul turned and walked briskly away toward Rhithymnas.

A short walk, and he caught sight of the fortress of Rhithymnas a short distance ahead, situated upon a projecting cape.

Upon every headland also loomed before his gaze ruined watch-towers of the old Roman time of occupation of Crete.

Before him glittered in the moonlight the several minarets, rising above the gray houses of the town, and then the view was shut out by his entering a wild and deep gorge, spanned by an arched bridge, also of Roman build.

Upon this bridge was a squad of soldiery; but, boldly walking forward, Paul confronted them—came to a halt at the stern order, gave the password obtained from the Turkish trooper, and passed on rejoicing.

He then struck into a solid highway of recent manufacture, and passing through the village of lepers, whose humble abodes are stuck, rather than built, in the rocky hills, he soon after came to a long, low, crumbling gateway, leading into the town.

Here he was again halted by a sentinel, and once more giving his password, he was permitted to enter the gateway, and without hesitation walked boldly into the Moslem-guarded town of Rhithymnas, where he knew not a soul, and where, also, he felt that death would quickly follow his recognition as a patriot of Crete.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A STARTLING RECOGNITION.

THROUGH the deserted streets of Rhithymnas Paul Malvern wound his way, searching eagerly, according to the directions given him by the Cretan Anthropon, for a hostelry where he could find shelter.

After a long and dreary search he found the khan,* a rambling half-ruined old structure, as are most of the houses in Crete.

As he rapped for admittance the moonlight was just paling beneath the approach of day, and the distant cone of Mount Ida rose grim and spectral in the distance.

He was at once admitted, and a piece of gold secured him good accommodations, notwithstanding his humble attire.

Worn out by his long walk and the suspense he had undergone, Paul at once threw himself down to rest upon a raised dais, softly cushioned, that occupied a corner of the room.

When he awoke it was creeping on toward noonday, and hastily summoning his landlord, he sent him out to purchase for him the attire of a European traveler.

This he soon rigged himself out in, and, after a hearty breakfast, sauntered forth to see if he could make any discoveries regarding the captive maidens or of Julian Delos.

A walk of half an hour brought him in front of an imposing edifice, the residence of the *kaimakan*, or governor, Khalim Bey.

As he stood gazing upon the busy scene in front of the mansion, for soldiers and officers were upon every hand, a man of splendid appearance, and brilliantly uniformed, came out of the mansion, and sprang upon a richly caparisoned steed, held for him by an *aide-de-camp*.

At a glance Paul recognized him as the captor of Kaloolah and Zuleikah, and sorely was he tempted to hurl himself upon him; but discretion he felt alone would aid him, and he contented himself with fiercely gazing after the de-

* A tavern—also called a *serais*.

parting Al Sirat Pasha, who drew rein a short distance off, and halted an *arabah** that was approaching.

Behind it came another vehicle, and upon either side walked several Ethiopian slaves.

Al Sirat Pasha detained the vehicles but an instant, and then rode on, while the party, continuing their way, came directly by where Paul was standing.

One glance into the *arabah* in front, and Paul Malvern beheld two female forms, which he recognized, in spite of the heavy veils that enveloped them from head to foot.

Instantly he had the presence of mind to turn away, for, had he been recognized he well knew the result, for in the leading vehicle sat Kaloolah and Zuleikah, their heads bowed down in very grief.

The second *arabah* contained a quantity of baggage and one form—that of old Eldrene, the Ethiopian slave.

The discovery momentarily stunned Paul, for he had left her, shrieking for aid, weeks ago, upon the Banks of the Bosphorus, when he had so daringly rescued Zuleikah from the harem of Al Sirat.

Her presence there in Rhithymnas proved that she had sought her master, and in some way held his confidence, for the maiden captives were evidently under her control.

Watching the vehicles and their Ethiopian guards, Paul saw them continue on down to the fort, as though to embark.

Instantly he followed, and arrived in time to see the party get into a large *caïque*, and row out to a vessel, which, with flapping sails, seemed awaiting their arrival.

In some way he decided to attract the attention of the maidens, if he could do so with safety to himself, that they might know he had not deserted them; so he at once sprang into a small *caïque*, that contained a single oarsman, and bade him row him slowly around the vessel, which was a large-sized tartan.

The boatman obeyed, and as the *caïque* passed under the stern of the vessel, a fair face suddenly gazed out of the port-light, as if longingly looking back to her native land.

The face was pale, haggard and sad-looking—the face of Kaloolah.

A motion of Paul attracted her attention, and for an instant he believed she was going to swoon away; but she quickly recovered herself, waved her hand, and disappeared from the stern-port.

An instant after two sad, pale faces filled the aperture, and Paul Malvern was face to face with Kaloolah and Zuleikah.

"Keep up good heart; we are on your track. Whither bound?" he asked in French, which he knew Zuleikah understood.

"To Istamboul—to the harem of Al Sirat."

It was all that Zuleikah could say, and her voice was choked with emotion.

The next moment a black face peered above the shoulders of the maidens. It was Eldrene, the Ethiopian.

Paul caught the evil glare of her eyes, the glitter of her white teeth, and knew that he was recognized.

"Pull for the shore! For your life, pull! Here is gold."

The boatman sent the *caïque* flying over the waters, and throwing him his reward Paul sprang on shore.

As he did so he glanced back toward the tartan.

Eldrene, then egress, was on deck, talking excitedly to an officer, and pointing shoreward.

Hastily he walked along, and coming to a bazaar sought shelter within upon the plea of making some purchases.

An hour after, with his arms filled with bundles of goods he had bought, he issued forth, and glanced out upon the port. The tartan was a league away, flying seaward under a heavy pressure of canvas.

"Thank God! they are for the present safe. Al Sirat remains here. Now to rescue poor Delos, if he is yet alive."

So muttering Paul walked rapidly on toward the khan where he was stopping, and depositing his burdens again sauntered forth in search of news regarding Julian Delos.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TALISMAN.

CAUTIOUS but diligent inquiry discovered to Paul Malvern that Julian Delos lay a prisoner in the fortress of Rhithymnas—that he had been recognized by some Turk, who had met him abroad, as the exiled Cretan, and was to be almost immediately put to death.

This was terrible news to Paul; but his intrepid nature never faltered, he would rescue his friend or perish with him.

But insurmountable obstacles seemed to confront him; how was he to overcome them?

Long he lay meditating and endeavoring to decide upon some plan of action; but, the more he thought the more puzzled and worried he became.

Then when he had worked himself into a fe-

ver of excitement, his eyes fell upon the signet ring he wore.

In an instant he was on his feet; his face flushed, his eyes flashing.

"Ha! I have it! I will go at once to the commander of the fortress and demand his release. No, I will seek Al Sirat himself."

His plan of action was soon formed. He again called upon his host.

"Go out and purchase for me a suit worthy of a Turkish lord; here is gold."

The host disappeared, and an hour after Paul Malvern issued from the khan attired magnificently as a Turkish noble.

Wending his way to the mansion of Al Sirat he saluted the Moslem sentinel and demanded an audience with the pasha.

"His highness, the pasha, is engaged, my lord," said the soldier, politely.

"Still I would see him; I have important business with him, firmly responded Paul.

The sentinel called to an aide-de-camp, who, learning Paul's desire, at once departed; but he returned soon after with the remark:

"The slippers of his highness are at the door of the harem; I cannot now intrude. My lord must enter the ante-room and wait the pasha's pleasure."

Paul knew it was useless to urge further, so he entered the waiting-room.

Yet he was surprised to learn that Al Sirat had a harem in Crete. He had imagined that, being in service in the field, he would have his wives and favorites at his kiosk in Constantinople. He was more than delighted to feel that Kaloolah and Zuleikah had been sent away from Rhithymnas.

For a long time he awaited—until the hour was getting late, and then the aide showed him to the presence of the pasha.

Al Sirat half-reclined upon velvet cushions in a sumptuously-furnished room, and he was idly smoking a scented *chibouque*, while a silver tray, containing quince preserves, sweet rolls and wine, stood in front of him.

"You would see me, signor?" and Al Sirat turned his piercing eyes upon the supposed Turk.

"Yes, your highness—and alone."

All Turks are suspicious, and Al Sirat was especially so, when he marked the accent with which Paul spoke the Moslem tongue.

But he drew his scimitar as if by accident, around, ready for his grasp, and motioned to the aide-de-camp and Ethiopian slave in waiting to retire.

"What would you, signor?"

Choking back his antipathy to telling a falsehood, and settling his conscience with the thought that the circumstances of the case required it, and that he was dealing with a man who held honor lightly, Paul Malvern said in firm tones:

"I would inform you, pasha, that you have overstepped your authority."

In an instant the Turk was on his feet, his eyes ablaze, his white teeth glittering.

"And who are you that dare thus address Al Sirat Pasha?"

"I am one who has authority, or I would not be so foolish as to thus beard a lion in his den," coolly replied the American.

The Turk gazed with increased amazement upon the man before him. Who could he be?

"You are no Turk, signor?" he asked, after awhile.

"By birth, no; yet I speak from the sultan when I repeat you have gone beyond your authority."

"In what way—to what do you refer?" asked the Turk, savagely.

"You hold as a prisoner one Julian Delos?"

"I do; he is an exile from Crete, as was his father before him; he has returned and must die."

"How know you that he is not here on secret service for his majesty the sultan, whom may Allah preserve in sovereignty many long years?"

"Bah! he came here to aid the Cretan rebels."

"How know you that, my lord?"

"He was captured in peasant's attire only yesterday; he was a spy."

"You mistake. Could not he be secretly serving his majesty the sultan, and causing the Cretans to believe him true to their cause?"

"It is not like him, from all accounts."

"Still, might not such be the case? might he not be laying some deep plan to entrap General Aztec, for which he would receive high office in the sultan's service?"

"Bring me proof of this, and he is free," and the Turk smiled grimly, as though he believed such proof not in existence.

Paul made no reply, but advanced toward Al Sirat, his left hand outstretched, the broad face of the ring turned toward the eyes of the Turk.

Al Sirat glanced searchingly at the signet, and seemed half-inclined to bend low in obedience to the wearer; but he said cautiously first:

"Let me look within the golden circle, signor."

* When the slippers of a Turk are at the outer door of his harem, it is a sign that he would be undisturbed, and no servant dare intrude upon him under penalty of severe punishment.

Paul instantly handed the ring, and Al Sirat taking it, read aloud, in the Turkish tongue what was therein engraven:

"OBEY! ABDUL AZIZ."

Then the Turk bent his haughty form low before his visitor while he said with great respect:

"Your highness's words are my law; the Cretan shall be at once released. Sent his majesty the sultan, no word to me?"

"You forget that I came hither on secret service. My presence here is to remain unknown. I betrayed myself to you to save the life of one of his majesty's faithful subjects, whom you had sentenced to death. At the time of the capture of the Signor Delos I could have saved him; but I cared not to make my power known."

"My lord, send an aide and have the Cretan brought hither."

The manner of Al Sirat was now wholly changed. He who bore the secret signet of the sultan was next to his august majesty; but, why a confessed foreigner should be thus honored by the confidence of the Turkish ruler, the pasha could not understand.

Still, he felt no doubt but that the story told him by Paul was wholly true, and touching a bell he called an awaiting aide-de-camp.

Going to a table, on which stood writing materials, Al Sirat wrote a few lines, affixed his private seal, and gave it to the officer, with a few instructions.

Then he called to a slave to bring refreshments and a fresh *chibouque*, and, begging Paul to be seated upon a divan of silk, he ordered placed before him sherbet, sweets, fruits and wine.

Paul sat down and seemed to enjoy the repast while he puffed away at his pipe with an air of luxurious indolence, and thoroughly a la Turque.

Thus some time passed, Al Sirat endeavoring, by cunning, yet polite endeavors, to ascertain what circumstances had brought the American to Turkey, and to adopt the creed of the Moslem; but Paul, without appearing so to do, evaded all questioning, and drew the conversation upon the revolution then waged in the island of Crete.

Unsuspectingly Al Sirat let out the number of Turkish troops then in the field, and his ideas of the Cretan soldiers then under arms, with other information which Paul was delighted to obtain.

At length steps were heard approaching, and the aide-de-camp entered, walking by the side of Julian Delos.

Now was a critical moment for Paul Malvern—nay, for both, as he feared that some sudden surprise or word of Julian might betray him.

"Signor, his lordship has seen fit to order your release," and Paul spoke in a strangely warning tone.

Julian Delos could hardly restrain a start of amazement, when he beheld, in one whom he had merely glanced at, and believed a Turkish noble, none other than his friend, Paul Malvern.

But, his nerve did not desert him, and feeling assured that the secret signet had been the talisman, he rejoined quietly:

"I felt that my freedom would come when it was known whom I served."

His words were strangely apropos, and Al Sirat at once made a few remarks about his being delighted at the happy termination of affairs, and begged Julian to join them in wine and refreshments.

But Paul was anxious to get away, as some unfortunate remark might betray them, and said, hastily:

"Your highness is very kind; but we now have an all-important and secret duty to perform—one that has been delayed by the capture of the signor here. Perhaps soon, your highness, we may have to call upon you for aid in an affair we have on hand."

"And gladly will I respond."

"I feel that you will. Now we will bid you, highness good-evening."

As Paul spoke he bowed to Al Sirat, and his example was followed by Julian, while the pasha conducted them to the outer door of his mansion.

Once in the street Paul seized Julian by the arm and hastened him rapidly along in the direction of the khan where he had his quarters.

CHAPTER XXV.

JULIAN GAINS AN ALLY.

"WELL, Malvern, what does all this mean?" cried Julian, as soon as he entered Paul's room, at the same time throwing himself down upon the cushioned divan.

"Hush! walls have ears—especially Turkish walls," and then, in a whisper, Paul continued:

"It means that you got captured, were recognized as the exile Delos, and were brought to Rhithymnas, where, sentenced by Al Sirat you were to die to-morrow at sunrise—or to-day, for it is now past midnight."

"It means that I came hither—some time I will tell you how; saw Zuleikah and Kaloolah, under the guardianship of that old ebony Witch of Endor, embark for Constantinople, en route to Al Sirat's harem on the Bosphorus; and that I then masqueraded as a Turkish noble, sought

* A painted cart, drawn by oxen or buffaloes.

the pasha, and proving to him that I was on secret service, by discovering the signet, gained your release, though I had to tell him you had proven traitor to Crete, and were in the service of the sultan."

"I cannot condemn you, for you have acted with such daring strategy; but you say that Kaloolah and Zuleikah have gone to Constantinople?"

"Yes, whither we start this night. Come; my host had orders to get us berths on a coaster that sails with the midnight breeze. Are you ready?"

The question was useless; Julian was at once on his feet.

"Here, don this sailor's garb; we are sailors now," and Paul, in high spirits, pointed to a bundle of clothing, which he had ordered the landlord to purchase for him, and in a short while the two friends were dressed as Greek seamen.

The host was then called, his bill most liberally paid, with a fee for his personal services, and an admonition to say nothing of his guests' arrival or departure.

Then the two friends sauntered leisurely from the khan, and soon found themselves down at the port, where Paul led the way toward a landing to which he had been directed by the landlord.

Here a boat, with a single oarsman, awaited them, and five minutes after they stood on the deck of a small, lubberly craft, that at once spread its dark sails and sped away, shaping her course up the Archipelago.

Though their quarters were most humble, the craft awkward and slow, and their companions rude sailors, Paul and Julian did not complain; they had escaped with their lives, and they felt that Zuleikah and Kaloolah were, for the present, safe; the only thing that fretted them was the lack of speed in the little craft.

Slowly the days and nights dragged their weary length along, and at last the little vessel dropped anchor in the port of Mitylene, in the island of the same name.

Quickly the two patriots went ashore, although it was late at night, gladly bidding adieu to their companions on the vessel.

As they walked along the streets of the town, seeking a khan for shelter, they came upon an animated scene—half a dozen drunken seamen dragging a huge Ethiopian viciously along, and at the same time striking him with no light hand, in spite of his cries for mercy.

At any other time Paul and Julian would willingly have come to the rescue of the unfortunate black, for they felt that he might fare badly in the hands of the drunken sailors; but they sought to avoid attention to themselves, when the Ethiopian again called out for mercy.

Something in the tones of his voice at once struck Julian Delos, and he called out, sharply:

"Mesrak!"

"*Mashallah!* Oh, signor!" cried the slave, and instantly Julian rushed upon the party, followed by Paul.

It was the work of an instant to hurl the seamen back, and rescue from them the black, while Julian said, sternly, speaking in the Asiatic tongue, for he recognized the nationality of the seamen:

"What means this? Quick, to your vessel, or I will have you taken at once before the sheik."

The seamen shrunk back, for they felt that they were in the presence of some one in authority, and with humble bows they hurried away.

"Well, Mesrak, how is it I find you here?" and Julian drew the slave into the light of a *cafe* window.

"Signor, I am here on my way back to Constantinople, and I owe you my life," humbly said the slave.

"Did my lieutenant give you the gold I promised?"

"He did, signor; he gave me gold in plenty, and my freedom, as you promised; but I was returning to Istamboul, and the vessel touched here and I left her, as the seamen suspected me of having treasure; but they came ashore after me, and were dragging me again on board, where they would have robbed and killed me, had you, signor, not prevented."

"Why do you return to Istamboul, Mesrak?"

"My mother is there, signor—she is yet a slave. I would have her with me."

Julian was silent a moment, and then he said:

"We are also returning to Istamboul, Mesrak; we leave here on the first vessel that clears for the Bosphorus. You shall go with us, and be my slave for the present. Serve me well, and I will give you ten times the gold I have already given you—ay, and I will bring you and your mother safely from the land of the Turk."

"My life is in your hands, signor; I will serve you," earnestly responded Mesrak, who was greatly delighted at his escape from the sailors, and felt that he could freely trust Julian, as he had kept his word to him in giving him his freedom and a belt full of gold.

A further search discovered a comfortable-looking khan, and the landlord was called up and quarters assigned to the travelers.

Two days in Mitylene and they took passage on a French schooner bound to Constantinople,

and after a quick run the vessel dropped anchor in the Golden Horn, and Paul Malvern and Julian Delos found themselves once more in the busy metropolis of the Turks, where a price was upon their heads, and peril would confront them at every turn.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PLOTTING.

UPON arriving in Constantinople, Paul at once suggested the khan, or inn, where he had before stopped, and upon the faith of whose landlord he felt that he could rely.

Once ensconced in pleasant quarters, the two friends, as soon as it was dark, sallied forth to look up Dimitri, the Greek merchant, leaving Mesrak in the khan, for the black was not anxious to expose himself to observation, not knowing how his absence was looked upon by Al Sirat, and what orders the police had regarding him.

Arriving at the bazaar of the Signor Dimitri, Paul and Julian were at once admitted, and found that the Cretan *junta* were already in session.

They were most warmly welcomed by the assembled patriots, and a full account of their successful voyage given; but of the circumstances that had really brought them back to Constantinople, they thought it best to say nothing.

During the council that followed Julian signified his readiness to take another cargo of supplies to Crete, and it was settled that a large and swift-sailing *tartan* should be at once procured, and secretly loaded with the stores and arms that would prove most acceptable to the struggling Cretans.

"And the vessel must be in readiness to sail by the third night from this. When loaded, let her be anchored in the middle of the Bosphorus, and just off the mouth of the Golden Horn, and have her clearance papers for Egypt," said Julian, in conclusion.

Then, giving their address to the Signor Dimitri, the two friends parted from the bazaar, and directed their way toward the shores of the Golden Horn.

Here they secured a small and light-rowing *caïque*, and seizing the oars, sent it swiftly over the waters. An hour's row brought them to the villa grounds of Al Sirat Pasha.

Landing, they quietly glided into the shadow of the oleander and myrtle-trees, and carefully inspected the kiosk and its environs.

Here and there lights glimmered in the windows; but the place was as still as the grave, and no guards seemed on the watch for intruders.

"So far, good! Now to see if they have arrived," said Julian, and returning to their boat they rowed away in the direction of where lay at anchor, or at their piers, the coasting vessels that had their trade between Constantinople and the Archipelago islands.

"You would certainly remember the craft, you think?" asked Julian.

"Yes; her rig was peculiar—I would know the vessel among a thousand."

Quietly the *caïque* glided hither and thither, among the numerous vessels at anchor, until, after a long search, Paul said, cheerfully:

"Here lies the vessel—I will swear to it."

Running alongside the craft, Julian called out in seaman-like tones:

"Ahoy! on board!"

"Ay, ay—what is it?" answered a gruff voice.

"Do you trade with Rhithymnas in Crete?"

"Yes; what then?" replied the same voice.

"Could you take passengers back with you?"

"We only came in port a week ago. We'll not go back for some days."

"Well, when you do go, could you not take back some slaves for Al Sirat Pasha?" and Julian innocently gazed up into the face of the be-whiskered Turk, who was now leaning over the bulwarks of the vessel.

"I think so; but Allah grant the old scratch-cat negress we brought on be not one of the party," laughed the man.

"You mean old Eldrene; did she not behave well?"

"She was mad as a hornet all the voyage. She behaved some man, whom she said had killed her son, and although we were getting up anchor she would have a boat sent ashore with a party in pursuit; but they didn't catch him, and that made the old woman mad."

"I hope she didn't show her anger to the fair ladies who were under her charge?"

"As to that I do not know. She raised a row on deck whenever she appeared."

"I thank you. Old Eldrene won't be one of your passengers: if we decide to send by your vessel we will let you know."

So saying, Julian rowed away, and when at a safe distance continued:

"Now, Malvern, we have found out all we would know; let us return to the khan, and talk over our plot."

Upon seeking their room they found Mesrak snoring lustily, and not caring to awaken him the two patriots sat down to plot and plan for the release of the maidens from their gilded misery in a Turk's harem.

After a long conversation they awoke Mesrak, and then the three went forth into the streets, all well armed.

It was getting late, but that was in their favor, and as they hurried along the narrow streets they met few wayfarers.

Seeking the spot where they had left their boat they sprung in, Mesrak seized the oars, and after a rapid row they ran in under the shelter of the hedge, at the very spot where Paul and Julian had landed the first night of their visit to the villa grounds.

"Mesrak, you await us here," and Julian sprung ashore, followed by Paul.

A walk through the embowered avenue, and they came to the wing of the building, and seeking the half-concealed window, gave three raps upon it.

Then they stood back in the shadow, scimitars and pistols drawn, ready to greet foes if foes should come.

A long waiting and again Julian rapped, more loudly than before.

Then from the closed shutter burst forth a circle of light, as a slide was withdrawn, and the black face of Eldrene was visible, while her harsh voice asked:

"Who is there?"

"*Mesrak!* Come quick!" whispered the Cretan, and the slide was at once closed, and steps resounded in the hallway.

The next moment the door in the wall opened, and the negress stood before them.

"Eldrene, thy son Mesrak would see you," said Julian.

The woman sprung back, sheltering herself with the nearly closed door, and said, angrily:

"You are not Mesrak, then—who are you?"

"I am one who brings you tidings of your son. He would see you."

"Where is he?"

"He is not far away. Will you go to him?"

"And let you catch me in a trap as you did my poor boy; oh, no!"

"Woman, I could kill you as you stand there, did I desire your life. I swear to you, by the Allah you worship, that thy son is safe. I kept my word with him, and he is free and has gold in plenty."

"Why does he not come to me, then?"

"Because he knows not how he would be treated. He feared that Al Sirat would take his life."

"The pasha believes him dead, as I have done. Are you telling me the truth? Does my son live?"

"I swear it by the prophets! He lives, and is well. Listen, Eldrene; would you see your son now, come with me to the jasmine bower yonder, and there my friend here will bring him to meet you. No harm shall befall you."

The woman hesitated, pausing between a loving longing to behold her son, and a certain dread of personal violence.

At length maternal love conquered, and she said:

"I will go. If harm befall me, my curse and the curse of Allah be upon your head and the heads of generations that may spring from you."

"So be it. Come!"

Julian then whispered a few words to Paul, who rapidly walked away.

Following Julian, the woman walked slowly along, her hand clutched close against her side, as if grasping the hilt of a knife, her dark, restless eyes peering into the shadow of every bush, as expecting, fearing treachery.

At length they reached the jasmine bower, and stood in silence awaiting—Paul calmly indifferent, the woman still suspicious.

Presently steps were heard approaching, and the clink of chains grated harshly upon the ear, as two forms appeared in the gloom.

Once glance and the woman recognized her huge son, and with a mother's heart brimful of joy, she sprung forward to greet him.

But as her arms were outstretched, she recoiled, as though from a serpent's embrace. He was ironed heavily, his wrists and ankles in manacles, and a collar of the same metal around his neck.

"Oh! Mesrak, my son! my son! pride of your old mother's heart," she cried in her native tongue, and disregarding, once she had seen them, the chains, she threw herself upon the broad bosom of the slave, and her shrunken form shook with emotion.

"Mesrak, what means this?" she asked, after awhile.

"Mother, you see I am a captive to these signors; but they treat me well, and I know that they will keep their word to me; but it depends upon you."

"Upon me? What can I do, my son?"

"You can gain for yourself and for me freedom—you can gain gold—oh! so much gold—if you only will."

"What am I to do?"

"You are to free the two maidens in the harem of Al Sirat Pasha."

The woman started, glanced anxiously up into the face of her son, and then toward the two patriots.

After a short pause she replied:

"Mesrak, I believed you dead, and I went to

Crete to avenge you, for I learned that those who took you away had gone thither."

"How did you learn this, Eldrene?" asked Julian.

"From Theodori. He is an Ionian Greek, and a *dragoman** in Constantinople."

"He was at our council to-night—he is a traitor, and this night he must die," whispered Julian hurriedly to Paul, and then he continued, addressing Eldrene:

"And he told you we had gone to Crete to join the revolutionists?"

"Yes; he has sold the pasha beauties for his harem, and I have known him long. He told me much more, and I followed you to Crete; but I cared not to lose my life, so I sought Al Sirat Pasha, and told him of the abduction of his favorite, the lady Zuleikah, and that my son had been spirited away. But he had that very day found the lady Zuleikah, and another beauty in Crete, and ordered me to return at once to Istamboul in charge of the maidens. I was forced to go, or be bow-strung. I chose the former, and am here."

"Eldrene, ask your son if he does not trust us fully, and then say whether you will aid us, and by so doing gain freedom and gold for yourself and son. If you refuse," and Julian spoke in terrible earnestness, *your son must die!*"

The negress groaned aloud, and then said, after a short conversation with Mesrak in their native language:

"What would you have me do?"

"Release those two captive maidens from the harem; then, with Mesrak, sail with us far from this land."

"And how can I do it?"

"That you must depend upon your woman's cunning and wit to accomplish. To-morrow night, at the *muezzin's* evening call to prayer, we will meet you here. In the meantime, concoct your plan of action, and let it be thorough, and put into execution at the earliest moment. Come, Mesrak."

One embrace between mother and son, and the three men walked away, leaving the woman standing like an ebony statue—cold and motionless.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BOW-STRINGED.

WHEN the *caïque* was again gliding over the Bosphorus, under the strong strokes of Mesrak, who had been relieved from his chains upon regaining the boat, Julian Delos said, with a determined ring in his tones:

"Malvern, it may seem strange to your American ideas that I intend to take upon myself the power of judge, jury and executioner; but a stern necessity compels it. I am living with my life in my hand, as are you also now. I am a conspirator against the government that has exiled me, and I cannot afford to let a traitor live in our midst."

"Such a traitor, we have to-night learned, is Theodori, a trusted councilman of the Cretan Junta, and he must die, or we will lose our lives, for he holds a most dangerous secret, and to him was given the duty of selecting a vessel for us. How easy for him to gain gold and position by betraying us."

"And you would slay him?" asked Paul.

"As I would strangle a mad dog. We will at once go to the bazaar of Dimitri, tell him of our discovery, and then seek the home of Theodori."

Paul made no reply; he liked not this taking the life of a human being in that way; but then, Julian Delos was a Cretan, one who had suffered deeply from the Turks, and one who entertained ideas that it would be useless to attempt to change.

If he decided that the unfortunate Greek must die, then he, as an under officer, could say nothing.

At length the boat touched the shore, and a walk of a few moments brought them to the bazaar of the Greek merchant, who was aroused by a knock on the door.

Entering the house, Julian made known to him what he had discovered, and the Signor Dimitri, at once, said that he was convinced that it was true—that Theodori was a traitor, for, knowing what he now did, he could understand some acts of the *dragoman* which had before been a puzzle to him.

"He must die—and this night. He may be even now plotting against our lives. My slave here has been an executioner: he will not object to performing his horrible functions once more—when the victim is a traitor."

"Where would you bear him?" asked the Greek.

"To the Bosphorus. It holds many dark secrets—it can keep hidden this one. Come, we have no time to lose; so get a *bowstring*, Dimitri, and we will repair at once to the home of the traitor."

The Greek saw that Julian was in deadly earnest, and his own fears of personal safety, should his recent plotting become known to the Grand Vizier, urged him the more to aid in the

*An interpreter—so called in the Levant.

matter, and he at once went for his cloak, and to procure the instrument of execution.

"Would it not be best to hold him prisoner, and carry him with us to Crete, where he could be executed after trial by military court-martial?" asked Paul.

"No; delays are dangerous. Here comes Dimitri; let us go."

Silently the party threaded the now wholly deserted streets—deserted save by prowling dogs that made night hideous with their howls.

At length the Greek paused before a low house and knocked upon the portal.

A few moments of suspense and the door was opened by the Ionian himself.

"Come, Theodori—we have arranged a plan for to-night and wish you to be principal actor in it. Throw your cloak around you," said Julian, quietly.

The *dragoman* retired, and soon returned, equipped for the walk.

Leading the way, and locking his arm in that of Theodori, Julian directed his steps toward the shores where he had left his chartered *caïque*, while, as they went along, he explained that they were going out upon the Bosphorus for a purpose he would explain when they arrived.

Unsuspectingly the unfortunate Ionian Greek sat in the boat, as it swept along, and not until a lonely part of the Bosphorus was reached, and Julian motioned to Mesrak to cease rowing, did he suspect harm toward himself.

Then, the traitorous part he had been playing toward his comrades, rushed in full force upon his guilty heart, and the bright starlight showed his face deathly pale.

"Theodori, you are a traitor, and must meet a traitor's doom."

The voice of Julian Delos was stern, cutting and determined.

The pallid lips essayed to speak; the teeth struck rattlingly together; the startled eyes rolled wildly, and no sound came from the lips of the doomed man.

"Theodori, will you swear by the God of the Christian, by the Allah of the Turk, and by every hope you hold hereafter, that you are not guilty of crime toward your compatriots?"

"No, I am guilty. To-morrow I would have betrayed you all; but how knew you?" gasped the unhappy man.

"It matters not. Your own lips have confessed your guilt. Have you aught to say ere you meet your doom?"

"No."

"No word for your wife and children?"

"I have no wife, no child; I am alone in the whole world."

The inexpressible sadness with which he spoke—with which he made this most sorrowful confession, cut Paul Malvern to the heart, and he glanced into the face of Julian Delos, hoping he would be moved too, and spare him.

If Julian Delos felt any emotion, his face never displayed that feeling. What his heart felt, none could see.

Paul then glanced at the Greek merchant. He was nervous, yet seemed in no humor to interfere. Whether that nervousness arose from fright at the danger he had escaped, through Theodori, or from being a witness of the scene out on the Bosphorus, Paul could not tell.

Then his eyes turned upon the slave. He was sullen-faced—indifferent; Mesrak was used to such scenes; he had seen the waters of the Bosphorus close over fairer faces, and more slender forms than the Ionian's; he had sunk beneath its waters lovely women whom Al Sirat Pasha had sent to their death from some whim, or from their unfaithfulness to him.

"Theodori—are you ready to die?"

"If so it must be, yes."

The Eastern nerve, in face of death, the stoicism of the Turk, had now come to the traitor, and he made no effort to cry out against his fate, no effort to escape.

"Mesrak, do your work; the man is in your hands."

Paul Malvern would have turned his eyes away from the sickening sight; but a strange fascination kept his gaze upon the doomed man.

Slowly Mesrak arose, and with a slender cord bound the unresisting hands and feet of the Ionian.

Then he laid him upon his back in the boat, and took up the fatal *bowstring*.

A few dextrous turns of his wrist, a gurgling sound from the throat of the victim, and then the Ionian, his form shuddering, writhing, was raised in the brawny arms of the Ethiopian, and placed gently in the quiet waters.

The writhing body caused the *caïque* to dance gracefully upon the tiny waves, and then the hideous spectacle sunk from sight beneath the dark waters.

A few bubbles burst upon the surface, a flickering of the starlight mirrored in the waters, and then all was as still once more as the heart when the spirit has departed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PASHA'S PET.

WITHIN a gorgeously-luxurious apartment, in the kiosk of Al Sirat Pasha, sat a lady of wondrous beauty, indolently toying with the tassels

of the silk velvet cushions that supported her voluptuous form.

Her costume was wholly oriental, with *dualma* of purple velvet, most richly embroidered with gold thread, while her balloon trowsers were of the finest silk, and around her waist was loosely entwined a woven sash of rare beauty, caught in on the left hip by a clasp of gold, a crescent, set with precious stones.

A veil of gauze hung from her head, and half concealed her beautiful face, while a turban, richly embroidered, and surmounted by a diamond crescent, hid waves of dark waving hair.

Dazzlingly fair was her complexion, perfect her features, and exquisite the whole contour of her form, with her tiny hands sparkling with rings, and slippers, worked in silver thread, upon her feet.

Her age could scarcely be more than four-and-twenty, and yet for six years she had ruled the harem, the household, the pasha himself, for the beautiful Photine was Al Sirat's pet.

Yet a woman seldom holds long sway in that oriental land. Sooner or later her glory departs, and the beauty of to-day is deposed for the new toy, which in a short while must also lose her power.

Perhaps some such thoughts as these were vibrating through the brain of the lovely Photine, for her brow was clouded, her lips firmly set, and upon the soft carpet one little foot tapped nervously.

In one hand she held an open letter—one she had received an hour since, and it was from her lord and master, and the paragraph that troubled her was:

"You will see that the best rooms are given the ladies Kaloolah and Zuleikah, and every attention shown them that may serve to make them forget their captivity."

"They are as beautiful as a dream, as you have doubtless discovered, and I would win their hearts; besides, they are Cretans, and you, being a Greek, should feel a kindly sentiment toward them. At any rate they are two of the brightest gems in their beautiful island, and my heart will bow down and worship them."

This was language that the Lady Photine did not like. She had seen the maidens and knew that her lord wrote the truth: they were indeed beautiful.

But then, if he bowed down to them, he must slight her, and Photine loved Al Sirat, and was jealous. She was a woman, too, and what will a jealous woman not do to rid herself of her rival?

Presently she arose and paced the floor, every motion showing the beauty of her form, and her exquisite grace.

Then her eyes flashed fire, and she placed her hand upon a bell; she had made up her mind—the pasha's pet was aroused to action.

In answer to the bell a servant appeared—a Turkish woman, with shrunken form and withered face. Once both had been beautiful—but that was years before.

Then she, too, had been the harem's favorite; now she was a menial, for her beauty had left her.

"Isilde, send the chief eunuch here."

The woman bowed and retired, and a moment after a tall, well-formed Ethiopian slave appeared in the doorway.

His face was emotionless, his attire pure white, and he was armed with a gemmed scimitar.

In a cringing way he entered the room, bowing low to the Pasha's Pet, for so Photine was called.

"Khem, you have orders to particularly care for the two maidens newly arrived?"

"Yes, my noble lady," replied the eunuch, in deep, guttural tones.

"They seem happy with their lot—eh?"

"No, lady; they bewail their fate most bitterly."

"Khem, what is your idea of gold? How much gold would you wish to consider yourself rich?"

The small eyes of the Ethiopian sparkled momentarily—gold was the god that he worshipped.

"If your ladyship would have me serve her, her own generosity would cause her to know what she should give me," cunningly replied Khem, fearing that if he gave a stated amount, it might not be equal to what Photine was willing to pay, for he saw that there was some ugly work on hand, and his close intimacy with a harem had taught him considerable about the ways of women; he knew that the Pasha's Pet was jealous, and of two maidens.

"Khem," and Photine spoke low and earnestly, "some accident must befall those two maidens; you understand me?"

"Yes, my lady."

"You have orders to take them rowing on the Bosphorus. The boat must leak, and go down. You swim well, I believe?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Swim ashore then, and leave them. If they cannot swim it is their misfortune, not your fault."

"I understand, lady. Accidents frequently happen on the Bosphorus."

"True. Bring me word of such an accident, and that it is fatal, and I will enrich you."

The eunuch bowed low, his small eyes glittering avariciously, and turning, he left the room—and Photine, the beautiful plotter, was left alone with her own thoughts.

As Khem departed from the room, he ran full up against Eldrene, an old lady he stood in holy awe of; but the anticipated gold before his eyes blinded him.

But, instead of giving the eunuch a knock, as was her usual custom, old Eldrene seized him by the arm, and said, simply:

"Come with me; I want you."

Khem instantly obeyed and was dragged into the room of the negress, who motioned to him to be seated.

In surprised silence he obeyed, and Eldrene said:

"Slave, you are the guardian of the two new favorites of Al Sirat Pasha?"

"Yes."

"You love gold?"

"Yes, and life too."

"Bah! what is a slave's life? Gold will buy you freedom. I have a plan to propose."

"I am listening," calmly replied the eunuch.

"Then continue to listen if you would serve yourself. To-night I intend to let two young men, foreigners, into the pasha's harem."

"What? woman!"

"Hold your tongue, or I will break your jaw with the hilt of your own scimitar."

This was a quietus. Khem held his tongue, and Eldrene continued:

"I intend to admit these two men into the harem—into the rooms of the two new favorites, and it is *your duty* to discover them there, do you hear?"

"Yes," and Khem dodged, as though he expected a blow for replying.

"Make no fuss when you discover the proceeding; but go off quietly and tell the Lady Photine, and ask what is to be done."

"She will command you to take a guard, arrest the two maidens and their lovers, and bear them out on the Bosphorus to die; but this is not all: you must discover that I am the guilty one who allowed them entrance, and therefore make the victims to be executed five—"

"And I must take you all out and bowstring you: is this what you wish to give me gold for?"

This was a too matter-of-fact way of understanding her words, and Eldrene hastened to correct the impression.

"No, fool! You are to take us out with the supposition that you are to give us to the Bosphorus, and you are to return and tell the Lady Photine that you did so."

"And what will become of you?"

"That is none of *your* business. We will be taken care of; but, mind you, the two companions whom you carry with you, must be faithful—they must of course know the secret, that we do not die, and they shall have half as much each as I give you."

"I will arrange with them," hastily replied Khem, for he saw a chance to get them to do his bidding for a small sum, and he get largely the lion's share. Besides, another idea of double profit flitted through his brain. He had a gold mine in his grasp, and it should not escape for the want of the digging.

"I will do as you wish. When do you desire me to catch you deceiving his lordship?"

"To-night. Come to the left wing of the kiosk at eleven o'clock."

"I will be there; have your gold ready."

So saying Khem arose and wended his way back to the apartment of the Lady Photine, and rapped gently upon the door.

"Come in," said the sweet voice of the jealous woman, and the next moment the two plotters were earnestly engaged in conversation. The rest of that conversation the next chapter will unfold.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PLOT.

NIGHT drew its dark curtain over land and water, and the oriental home of Al Sirat Pasha was seemingly in deep repose.

Yet the lady Photine was still awake, and nervously was she pacing to and fro, her brow clouded, her lips stern.

Presently a low tap came at her door, and, light as it was, it startled her—her thoughts were evidently of a guilty nature.

To her answer, the tall, white-robed form of Khem, the eunuch, appeared.

"Well, slave?"

"Your noble ladyship, I have come to prove to you my suspicions expressed this morning."

"Inshallah!" cried Photine, using the Turkish expression, half as an oath, half as an ejaculation of surprise.

"Yes, lady. I told you, this morning, that I believed the negress Eldrene faithless to her trust, and would prove her such."

"Yes, and I told you that if you proved to me that your suspicions were correct—that the ladies Zuleikah and Kaloolah, through the treachery of the negress Eldrene, received their lovers in this kiosk—broke the sanctity of the harem—that you should have the gold that I promised you, if you let them drown, accidentally, in the Bosphorus."

"Yes, my generous lady, and I have come to prove my words. The harem is now violated and the lovers of the Cretan maidens are now with them."

Photine was almost wild with excitement, and momentarily could not speak; but controlling her emotion by a great effort, she said:

"Prove this, and I will order the entire party to their death. Prove this, Khem, and this night shall you become their executioner, ay, within the hour shall the Bosphorus receive them, and you shall have your reward."

"Yes, if the sanctity of the harem is violated, I have the right to order the death of the violators, for such right Al Sirat Pasha invested me with."

"Lady, I go to call my guard. Then will I come for you, and conduct you to the rooms, where your own eyes shall behold the truth of what I have told you."

"Hasten, or all may fall through. Hasten, slave, would you earn your gold?"

Away went the Ethiopian, and drawing her veil over her face, and throwing an embroidered shawl around her, the beautiful plotter awaited nervously the return of the slave.

Soon he came, and with him two Ethiopian eunuchs, as black and ugly as himself.

All three were armed thoroughly, and carried their scimitars in their right hands.

Leading the way, the chief eunuch threaded the long hallways, closely followed by his two guards, and in the rear lightly glided the lady Photine.

Soon Khem halted before a heavy curtain that concealed a door, and the next instant the portal was thrown open and the three slaves sprung within, followed closely by Photine.

It was a large elegantly furnished apartment, and in it were four persons who sprung to their feet upon the rude entrance of the party.

Those four were Kaloolah and Zuleikah, Julian Delos and Paul Malvern, and they were seated at a table, apparently enjoying refreshments, when so unceremoniously disturbed.

"Seize the traitors! Seize and bind them!" almost shrieked Photine, and the slaves hurried themselves upon the two young men, who were unarmed, and could offer no resistance.

In five minutes Paul, Julian, and the two maidens were securely bound.

"Now, where is the arch traitress?"

As Photine spoke old Eldrene bounded into the room most nimbly for one of her age, and at once she found herself in the iron grasp of the slave Khem.

"Bind her! and then bear all three away. You know your duty, slave, and I command you to do it."

"Your noble ladyship shall be obeyed," and the eunuch bowed low in obeisance, as, with trembling form, flashing eyes, and joyous twitching of the face, the beautiful woman turned and glided from the room.

Happy indeed was she, for by their own act her lovely rivals had rid her of their presence. By the Turkish law they had sentenced themselves to death, when they violated the sanctity of the harem.

If she did not order them to death—they and their lovers—she knew that Al Sirat would, and thus she reassured herself with the thought that she would be guiltless of their death.

Sternly Khem bade the culprits follow him, and slowly the party moved from the room, out into the night, and then down the myrtle avenue, leading to the landing stairs.

Here they entered a large *caïque*, the two under slaves seized the oars, and away sped the boat over the dark waters of the Bosphorus, which were now lost in midnight gloom, while clouds obscured the stars from view.

A row of half a league, and the *caïque* shot alongside of a large vessel of the *tartan* class, and here was made fast.

"Come."

It was all that the eunuch said, and as Paul arose in obedience to this command, his bonds were taken from him, and he stepped on board the *tartan*, where he was met by the Signor Dimitri.

Soon after, one by one, followed Julian Delos, Kaloolah, Zuleikah, and old Eldrene, who, as she stepped from the *caïque*, handed to Khem a large bag filled with gold.

"Return and report that you did your duty. If I mistake not, the Lady Photine will reward you also, for she was almost crazed with jealousy."

So saying, old Eldrene stepped on board the vessel, and the *caïque* rapidly sped away out into the gloom of the strait—Khem rejoicing in the double plot he had played, and which had enriched him through the generosity of Julian Delos.

Upon the deck Eldrene found herself in the arms of her huge son, for Mesrak was no longer in irons; he was free, and seemed happy in his freedom.

Then the anchor was hoisted, farewells said to the Signor Dimitri, who sprung into his waiting boat alongside, the sails let fall by willing hands, and the sharp prow of the *tartan* turned down the Bosphorus, flying like some huge bird, away from the land of strange deeds and stranger people.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MONASTERY OF ST. ELMOS.

ADOWN the sea of Marmora, through the Dardanelles, and then to the rendezvous appointed with the Silver Scimitar, sped the *tartan*, without adventure or mishap, and then the valuable stores and precious human freight were transferred to the hold and cabin of the yacht, which at once set sail for the fair isle of Crete.

A few days of eluding Turkish cruisers, and once again the beautiful vessel landed beneath the shadow of the ruined temple, and once again, in the bright moonlight, the toiling crew were busy carrying the supplies from the schooner to the ruin.

Then as the night faded before the approach of day, the Silver Scimitar sped seaward to cruise here and there, yet with orders to touch once in every two weeks at the cliff, for any orders that might await from her commander.

Within the ruin were soon safely ensconced the two maidens, Julian and Paul, and a score of patriots who had accompanied them from Constantinople, and, content to remain with them as servants, were old Eldrene and her huge son Mesrak, who were now most glad that they had escaped from the service of Al Sirat Pasha.

It had been the intention and the desire of Julian and Paul to convey Kaloolah and Zuleikah to England for safety; but this plan the maidens stoutly contested; they refused to be in England while their lovers—for such their hearts acknowledged the two young men to be—were in danger in Crete, and it was at last agreed that they should go to the island and become inmates of the monastery of St. Elmos, the head priest of which having been a warm friend of El Estin.

As Kaloolah paced to and fro the marble flooring of the ruin, her thoughts were overwhelmingly sad, for it was there, only several months gone by, that her father had met his death—there that his mangled body had been so mysteriously spirited away.

Again, Julian had gone for a reconnoissance through the orange grove, and brought to her sad tidings—her loved home was but a mass of charred and blackened stones.

The Turks had been there, slain her faithful servants, and left her girlhood home in ashes.

With the coming light the whole party sought shelter in the deep recesses of the ruin, and thus passed away the hours of daylight; but with the coming of night they were all astir, and the party set off on foot for the Cretan lines, intending to pass *en route* the Monastery of St. Elmos, where was to be the retreat of the maidens until the cruel war was over.

The supplies were safely concealed in the ruin, which seemed wholly deserted, for not a sound or sight had come to the hearing or vision of the party while within its crumbling walls.

As the little troop filed into the orange grove Kaloolah turned for one last look back upon the moonlit ruin.

Instantly a cry burst from her lips—a cry that caused all to glance backward in alarm.

There, standing where her father had fallen, the moonlight streaming brightly down upon her, stood the phantom of the ruin—her hands outstretched toward them, either in entreaty, or warning them away—which, none could tell.

Paul at once turned to fly back toward the spectral being, but an iron grasp was upon his arm, and Julian sternly said:

"Do not dare! Yonder being is not of this world."

Once more the party moved forward, and then the old temple and its haunting specter were hidden from view.

It was a long, hard walk of seven leagues to the monastery—an arduous tramp for Kaloolah and Zuleikah; but Paul and Julian supported them, and, as the sun gilded the snow-capped cone of the Cretan Ida, the gray walls of St. Elmos loomed up before them.

The high priest, a middle-aged man, with robust form and rubicund visage, received the party most kindly, for he was a sympathizer with the revolution, and honored the brave defenders of Crete.

The maidens, with Paul and Julian, were at once ushered into pleasant rooms, and after a short delay a breakfast of eggs fried in oil, cheese-curd, barley-bread, coffee and red wine was placed before them, while the troops were cared for by young, serious-looking priests, adorned with apostolic hair, and jackets of blue velvet, and who seemed to relish the surprise they had in a party of visitors.

A rest during the day, and then Paul and Julian bade farewell to Zuleikah and Kaloolah, and at the head of their soldiers set out for the camp of General Aztec, which was ten leagues distant in the mountains.

Through the night, their way illumined by the moon, they continued their journey, and to the joy of the Cretan commander arrived safely in camp, and made their report.

Nor were the two heroes, for such they found themselves in the eyes of the patriot officers, adverse to leading a squadron back to the coast after the supplies, for they determined to give another call *en route* at the monastery, although a few miles out of their way. Why they de-

sired to visit St. Elmos the reader who has ever loved can readily imagine.

The expedition to the coast, the visit to the monastery, and the return with the stores to the patriot camp met with success, and at once Paul Malvern and Julian Delos found themselves enrolled in the Cretan Army of Revolutionists as colonels of cavalry, with the civil title also of *beyzadehs*.*

From the day they donned their gorgeous uniforms as soldiers of Crete, the bitter struggle seemed to be more fiercely waged, and superhuman exertions were made by the struggling handful of Christians to tear the cross from the crescent—to drive their Turkish rulers into the sea, and raise their own standard over the hills and valleys, the plains and shores of their down-trodden isle of the sea.

Then the island trembled with the roar of cannon, the bursting of shells, the tramp of ruthless soldiery, and the nights grew bright from the burning villages and homes, while the shrieks of women, the cries of children, the wail of the desolate and groans of the dying were heard far and wide.

Would the reader know all that the men and women of Crete suffered in that terrible war, let him turn to the history of that gallant struggle of 1868-9—its horrors would never do to weave into the pages of this over-true romance.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SHADOW ON THE LAND.

FOR long and weary months the bitter struggle continued, until the fair isle of Crete had been almost wholly laid waste by the ruthless soldiers of the great Eastern monarch—the ruler of the Ottoman empire.

But gallantly had the patriot islanders fought and fallen in defense of their cause, until at length driven to the verge of destruction, the remnant of the army of General Aztec retreated to the mountains, not very far from the monastery of St. Elmos.

In all those months Paul and Julian had seldom seen Zuleikah and Kaloolah—still, once in a while, they would dash swiftly away on a visit, and swear eternal love and devotion to those two who so anxiously watched their career, and heard with pride the name they were winning as the bravest of the brave of the Cretan defenders.

At length, the army under command of Al Sirat Pasha threatened the valley in which was the monastery of St. Elmos, and Paul and Julian were in dire trouble, and were endeavoring to in some way rescue the maidens from the Turkish power.

While they were thus plotting and planning, seated in their quarters, a mere mountain home, leaky and uninviting, a sentinel announced a courier with important news.

The next instant a slender form entered. It was the Sfakiote, the courier who had borne the first news of the arrival of the Silver Scimitar to General Aztec.

Though they had only seen him by moonlight they at once recognized him and greeted him warmly.

"Signors, I bear important tidings. I come from the high priest of St. Elmos' monastery, begging for soldiers to defend his position. As you know, the cellars are filled with vast quantities of ammunition, which we cannot afford to lose."

Julian Delos groaned in agony of spirit. He knew but too well that all the supplies of the patriots had been stored in the monastery.

"Mesrak, ask General Aztec to come hither, please."

The Ethiopian, who, in his experience as Julian's servant, seemed rather to enjoy camp life, set off in haste for the Cretan generalissimo.

In a few moments the general arrived—wan, haggard-looking, yet unconquered.

Then the nature of Sfakiote's tidings was made known to him, and he answered at once:

"I can do nothing. We are driven to the last extremity. If General Asteras does not come to our aid soon, we must surrender—or die in our tracks; the monastery must go."

"You will permit Malvern Bey and myself to take a hundred men, general, and bring from the monastery those who are most dear to us there?" said Julian, anxiously.

"No, Delos Bey, I cannot spare you—ha! who comes here?"

An aide de camp dashed up, his horse white with foam, and the brave face of General Aztec flushed as he recognized him.

"Captain Nikephoro, *kalos orizete*,"† and General Aztec held forth his hand to a handsome young officer who sprang from his horse, and came toward him.

"What tidings?"

"General Asteras has capitulated to Hadji Pasha."

It was all that the young Cretan could say; his voice failed him, and he turned away to hide his emotion, while his hearers were as deeply affected.

At length he continued:

* Hereditary Bey.

† Welcome.

"General Asteras was hemmed in, and when resistance was madness, surrendered his whole command. I escaped through the Turkish lines to bear you the news."

General Aztec was silent for some moments, and then he said slowly, and with deepest feeling:

"Signors, our cause is lost! Either the force of Hadji Pasha, or Al Sirat Pasha outnumber me five to one; both of them will now hurl themselves against me, and crush out the last flame of Cretan patriotism."

"Signorss, I hold you no longer. You are young; you have those who love you. Take what troops will follow you, seek the monastery, and rescue your friends; then seek the coast and escape."

"And you will go with us, general?" asked Julian.

"No; I will take my own band of brave Sfakiotes, and retreat to our native mountains and disperse them; but where is the Sfakiote courier who brought the news from St. Elmos?"

In vain the search; the courier had silently departed, Mesrak said, sometime before. Mounting his horse he had sped back the way he had come.

"Signors, you have no time to lose. To-morrow, nay, to-night, Al Sirat Pasha may surround the monastery with his army."

This hint was sufficient to both Paul and Julian. They hastily gathered their effects, called around them a few score of Cretans, whose homes were on the coast, and then followed a sad parting with their brave old commander. How much sadder would it have been could they have known that a few days after he was to be taken and shot to death by the stern order of Hadji Pasha!

So wringing the hand of the brave old Aztec, the two boys mounted their horses, and with sad hearts rode away from the camp, leaving behind them a mere remnant of a once gallant army—an army that had fought its last fight, won its last battle.

At the back of Paul and Julian rode the faithful Mesrak, and following came four-score of troopers—men who lived on the coast, and who were to disperse and return to their homes as soon as they had served as an escort to their officers to and from the monastery of St. Elmos.

Rapidly the troop sped along, and early in the afternoon arrived in sight of the monastery walls, and the hearts of Paul and Julian throbbed with joy, when they beheld no encircling army of Turks, or the red field and star and crescent banner of the Moslems waving over the sacred walls.

Descending into a small vale, they suddenly heard several shots, fired in rapid succession, and dashing forward, came upon a scene that at once caused Julian to cry, in ringing tones:

"There are your foes, Cretans. Charge!"

With wild cries of *Zito! Zito!* the squadron dashed forward, their spurs jingling, their scimitars whirling.

And upon what?

A score of Turkish cavalry surrounding a fallen steed, and two human forms that lay upon the ground.

But the Cretans were upon them ere they were aware of danger, and though the Turks resisted bravely, fighting with that Mohamedan courage that is a part of their nature, in five minutes the combat ended—ended with the fall of the last Moslem, and the death and wounding of several Cretans.

Then Julian spurred forward to where the fallen steed and the two forms lay.

The one was a Turk, shot through the head, and the purple tassel of his fez hat stained red with blood; the other was the Sfakiote courier, who, a few hours before, had so mysteriously left the Cretan camp.

He lay, pinned down by his horse, and either stunned or dead.

Bounding to the ground, Julian knelt by his side, and with Paul's assistance, dragged him from beneath the body of his dead horse.

Then he quickly laid him comfortably upon a mossy bank, and tore open his velvet jacket in search of a wound.

With amazement he started, and then ran his hand lightly over the upturned face. With the motion the dark mustache came from the lip, the turban was displaced, and a wealth of dark hair burst forth—the Sfakiote was a woman!

Nay, more: in that beautiful face, now devoid of disguise, Julian Delos recognized one who was dearer to him than all the world. Kaloolah, either in a deep swoon or dead, lay before him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HIGH PRIEST'S VOW.

It was true: Kaloolah was the Sfakiote courier, for her father being of that peculiar people, she had so called herself.

Kaloolah, therefore, it was who had so daringly carried the news of the Silver Scimitar's first arrival to the camp of General Aztec, and had

* Equivalent to *hurrah!* or *live!*

boldly charged through the Turkish squad that opposed her.

Kaloolah it was who had again, in disguise, sought the mountain camp of the Cretans, and, returning, had again attempted to rush through a raiding party of Moslems that had come suddenly upon her.

She had shot down one, and her fleet steed was flying away when a bullet brought him down.

Unhurt by the fall, but pinned down beneath her animal, Kaloolah saw her foes rushing upon her, and despairing of aid she swooned away.

Under the care of Julian she soon recovered consciousness, and, mounting the steed of a dead Turk, the party pressed on to the monastery, where they found a scene of wild excitement, for a scout had come in and reported Al Sirat Pasha and his soldiers advancing—that within two days they would surround the monastery.

"They shall never raise the crescent over these walls, firmly said Aquasti, the high priest."

"It would be madness to resist them, your holiness; you have but a hundred retainers here, and—"

"Yet, I swear, Delos Bey, that this monastery shall be a heap of stones before Turkish feet pollute it."

"What would you do, your holiness?" asked Paul, struck by the manner of the priest.

The eyes of the holy man flashed, his form was drawn up, and the words came keen and determined from his lips:

"What would I do? I would myself throw the brand into the powder barrels in the cellar, and as the Moslems pressed forward hurl them before that God in whom they do not believe."

"You would sacrifice your own life then?" asked Julian.

"Ay, and of those under my control! The nuns, the sisters, the orphans, and my brother priests, with the retainers of the monastery, will all go with me—we will die together, and our death shall send a wail through the land of Moslem. Oh! it will be glorious to die thus! Come, my friends, join with me in this noble death—this refusal to surrender the walls of God to the ruthless invader."

A holy light made the face of Aquasti sublime and radiant with Christian courage; but, though impressed by his manner, and at heart most patriotic, neither Paul nor Julian could appreciate the position sufficient to join the brave, good man in his act of desperate devotion, and the former said:

"It is sure death to remain here; that is certain. To-morrow we will leave for the coast."

"Yes, with the break of day we will leave," answered Julian, and the two friends set about preparations for the journey, and Kaloolah and Zuleikah aided them all in their power; but Kaloolah appeared *distrain*; something seemed to weigh upon her mind; she was to leave Crete, and her father had not been avenged—Al Sirat still lived! Nay, more; her poor father's body had not yet been found, and might be still unburied—its bones bleaching in some valley or on some hillside.

Through the long hours of the night Aquasti was praying, and talking to the residents of the monastery, and to a man, woman and child, they entered into his desperate plan with stern determination; they would die with him—be hurled into the presence of their Maker, smoke and powder begrimed, if the priest said so, and by such an act they would carry the souls of some hundreds of infidel Turks along with them to the judgment seat of Heaven.

With the first peep of day the party mounted their horses, Kaloolah by the side of Julian, and Zuleikah by the side of Paul.

Behind them came Mesrak and Eldrene, and then the line of Cretan cavalry, four score in number.

Farewells were then spoken, and with prayers wafted after them by the devoted monasterians, the order was given to march, and the gates thrown open.

But Julian Delos reined his steed back with terrific force, for his eyes fell upon a sight that sent a chill through his heart.

All around the monastery, encamped in the valley, and a mile distant, was a belt of Turkish soldiery—their cannons ranging upon their foes, their line unbroken.

Silently, in the darkness of the night, like a huge serpent, they had coiled themselves around the doomed fortress.

All eyes saw the sight, and a wail of anguish went up from the walls of the monastery.

But momentary only the panic; and then the voice of Aquasti made order out of chaos.

Their enemies were around them; they would face death as they had sworn to do.

"Down into the cellars, brothers; break open those barrels of powder; scatter their contents over the floors, and lay a train from there to this spot."

The high priest spoke without a tremor of fear. He intended to keep his vow.

"Good God! he will blow us all into the other world. Here it is certain death; yonder there is a chance for life!" cried Paul Malvern, and

he pointed with his scimitar to the Turkish line.

"You are right, Paul. We will cut our way through them, and gain the mountains. Once there we are safe, at least for several days. Men! form for the charge!"

A cry of *zito! zito!* greeted the words of Julian Delos, and at once the charging column was formed—the Cretan Bey in front, with forty men—then Zuleikah and Kalcolah, with Eldrene, and by their side Mesrak with a dozen troopers; behind them came two score more patriots, with Paul Malvern protecting the rear.

While they were thus forming, the high priest had gathered his children around him, and the train of powder was laid to his very feet, while a burning brand was near him.

"Better die with us, my children!"

"No, your holiness, we will take our chances," grimly responded Paul.

"There you die by the hand of the infidel; here you die gloriously upholding the cross of God!"

"If die we must, then we will die with arms in our hands, and the bright blue sky above us. Farewell, father! You are a noble, brave man, and you are surrounded by noble people. If ever I escape this day, never will I forget your devoted courage, your magnificent heroism, and other people shall know of this deed of yours. Farewell!"

As Paul spoke the column moved forward, and then from the kneeling priests, nuns, and children, broke forth a wild dirge for the dead; like the Indian, in the forests of our own land, they were singing their death-song!

Like a whirlwind the cavalcade swept from the walls of the monastery—behind them the voices of the doomed band, before them their cruel enemies.

Down the hillside, across a low field, and the squadron struck the Turkish line; but there was no recoil—only a momentary check, and then was heard the roar of cannon, the shrieking of shells, the rattle of musketry, the clash of steel, the trampling of hoofs, the wild *zito! zito!* of the Cretans, the *Allah-il-Allah!* of the Turks.

Then there was a confused mass of struggling horsemen, a pressing, reeling, staggering forward, and yet the band of heroes rushed on—on—on—their lines thinning, their pathway dotted by their fallen—brave soldiers environed by Turkish dead.

Smaller and smaller grew the number, weaker and weaker their struggle, while streams of blood trailed from their staggering, maddened steeds.

Before them lay the mountain fastnesses. A short ride onward, one more gallant struggle and they must meet triumph; behind them swarmed hordes of their enemies; around them hovered cruel, savage foes.

One effort more! Then before them was an outpost; but its soldiers had rallied to check the little band.

"Upon them, men!"

Julian Delos's voice was hoarse—his eyes glowing—his pistols empty—his scimitar blood-stained.

"Upon them, men!"

It was an echo from Paul Malvern—wounded, bleeding, but full of nerve.

And upon them they went—met the crash, and—swept on!

The hills were gained, and they were safe—for no further did their foes dare follow them.

Safe! A mere handful of humanity—not a score in number, yet brave and defiant to the last.

Safe! and they glanced their eyes back over the bloody track they had come—back over the dead-strewn path—back toward the monastery.

As they gazed, they beheld thousands of Turks rushing upon the monastery walls, their bayonets glittering in the rising sun.

As they looked they beheld the Moslems reach the walls, enter, and then the very hills beneath their feet trembled; the whole island seemed sinking in the sea—seemed rent in twain by some mighty earthquake, and up from the monastery arose a mass of earth, stones, dust, and smoke—up into mid-air, veiling the brightness of day, burst this huge, chaotic mountain, and in its density were visible hundreds of white and dark-robed forms—hundreds of flying atoms of humanity, blown into fragments.

Then followed heavy thuds, as the mass fell back to the earth, and the Turkish army, transfixed with horror, stood like statues of bronze.

Then, through the mountains rumblingly rolled the echoing dirge—the deep basso requiem of the departed spirits.

The high priest had kept his vow.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A MYSTERIOUS DEED.

SEVERAL days after the destruction of the Monastery of St. Elmos, by the hand of the gallant high priest, Aquasti, a small cavalcade of six persons filed slowly down a steep mountain pathway, and wended their course toward the coast, at a point a league distant from the

haunted ruin, and where a small fisher's hamlet clustered against the rocky cliff.

The cavalcade comprised a party already well known to the reader, my two heroes and heroines, and the Ethiopians, Mesrak and Eldrene.

Slowly and watchfully they rode along, the day near its close, and their faces anxious, for hope and fear alternately filled their hearts.

From their retreat in the mountains, where they had remained since the desperate ride for life, recuperating their energies, and allowing several slight wounds, received by Paul and Julian, to heal, they had descried far out on the Mediterranean a vessel approaching, which, after a long look through his glass, Delos Bey pronounced to be his own yacht, the swift Silver Scimitar.

At once preparations were made to meet her at the coast, and farewells were said to the few brave Cretans who still clung to their fortunes.

Then they started upon their perilous journey, and at length arrived near enough for the noise of the surf to greet their ears.

Heading for the hamlet, where they could get a boat, to put forth and meet the yacht, they were congratulating themselves upon their safety being assured, when before them suddenly appeared a squad of horsemen.

One glance, and they recognized the Turkish cavalry—nay, worse yet, in the front rode Al Sirat Pasha.

Both parties recognized each other at a glance, and Al Sirat urged his men forward.

Swiftly the little party turned, and sped adown a narrow neck of land, hoping for some means of safety there, or that they could keep their foes at bay until the yacht came in, for she was yet miles away.

A flight of half a mile, and they found themselves in a trap—they were on the point of land, whose earthen arm formed the shelter of the little cove where the Silver Scimitar had first anchored.

Around them was the sea; before them were their pursuers.

Hastily concealing the maidens and Eldrene in a rocky gorge, the three men drew their weapons and stood at bay, protected by a slight embankment.

Thus they waited—Paul, Julian and Mesrak, well knowing that it was death to them to be taken, and a life of misery to those they loved. Kaloolah and Zuleikah well knowing that it was more than death for them to be taken, and Eldrene feeling that her end was near at hand.

Thus they stood at bay—their only safety in the brave resistance they could make, and in the coming of the yacht.

Presently the Turks charged them—a gallant charge, yet one that was repulsed by the three brave defenders of the point of land.

Again and again the Turks rushed forward, and several gallant Moslems fell dead at arm's length from Paul and Julian—but the others were hurled back.

Then a bugle-call was heard, and a squadron of cavalry were seen approaching: reinforcements had come to Al Sirat.

Then all hope was abandoned; and Paul and Julian felt that they must die, for the yacht was yet a league away, but coming swiftly, and the Turks were dashing on.

But, that glance seaward discovered a strange sight to Paul Malvern, and a cry broke from his lips.

All turned and beheld a long, light rowing craft, snow-white, and gliding rapidly, approaching the spot where they stood.

But, stranger still, it held two remarkable-looking persons—a tall, slender, womanly form, veiled and clad in snow white, standing in the stern, steering—a deformed, hideous-faced Ethiopian, with black face and grinning teeth, at the oars.

The next moment the white skiff struck the shore—and the woman cried:

"Come! Would you save your lives—come!"

Instantly Paul and Julian darted forward; the maidens were seized in their strong arms, and hurried into the boat; the next instant Mesrak followed, bearing his old mother.

"Quick! shove off; the Turks are upon us!" came the stern order from the woman.

Seizing oars Paul and Julian obeyed, and urged by the strong arms of the deformed Ethiopian the boat shot away.

And not a moment too soon, for hardly were they out of pistol range before Al Sirat and a hundred horsemen dashed up to the spot where they had a few minutes before stood.

Seeing that they were escaping him, Al Sirat Pasha drove his spurs into his steed and darted away in the direction of the fishing hamlet, where several boats lay upon the beach.

"Yonder vessel is your only safety; I will head for her."

Paul turned upon the speaker; she was deeply veiled, and he could not see her face.

As they got out of the cove, and headed for the yacht, they beheld Al Sirat Pasha and half a dozen men spring into a fisher's boat and start in pursuit, but the yacht was only a short distance away now, and heading for them.

A row of ten minutes more and they ran alongside the Silver Scimitar and sprung on board.

"Signor Stellos, stand for yonder boat! If it attempts to put about sink it," was Julian's stern order, as soon as he had been greeted by his young officer, who was standing for the hundredth time, gazing into the basin under the ruined temple, to see if he could learn aught of the commander.

But Al Sirat seemed in no humor to retreat. He rode boldly on until within hailing distance of the yacht, and then called:

"Ahoy, that craft! I demand those fugitives in the name of his august majesty, the sultan."

"Come alongside and show your authority," answered Lieutenant Stellos in French—the language in which Al Sirat had hailed.

A few moments more and Al Sirat Pasha, a tall, fine-looking *aide-de-camp*, and several troopers sprung on board the Silver Scimitar.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A STRANGE SCENE.

"AL SIRAT PASHA, you are my prisoner!"

The Turk started—he was confronted by Julian Delos.

"Your prisoner! Why, you but now came aboard this vessel. A fugitive from me, you sought safety here under the English flag."

"This vessel is mine. I repeat, you are my prisoner; your *aide* and men can return ashore, and let them report that Al Sirat Pasha has gone on a cruise—a cruise for the port of death."

The Turk at once threw himself upon the defensive, but his scimitar was at once struck from his grasp by Paul Malvern, who at the same time leveled a pistol at his heart.

"You see I am master here. Iron him, Stellos."

Instantly the haughty Al Sirat Pasha, he whose command made armies tremble, found himself a manacled prisoner.

"Now, signor, you and your men go back to your boat would you save your lives."

The *aide* and the soldiers instantly turned to obey, seeing that resistance was useless.

But, suddenly Paul Malvern sprung forward, his face livid, his eyes ablaze, while he cried in tones that thrilled every one:

"No, no; not you, Archer Trevillian—not you! We have well met; into your boat, men, but your officers remain."

The man addressed as Archer Trevillian turned one gaze upon Paul Malvern, then his face became deathly white, his eyes started, and his form quivered; yet he could utter no word—fear evidently overpowered him.

"Iron him, Stellos! We need him, too, it seems," said Julian, grimly, and the order was at once obeyed.

Then the Turkish soldiers awaited no longer for an order to depart; they sprung into their boat and rowed shoreward in all haste.

"Al Sirat Pasha, you must die; your hour has come," said Julian, sternly.

"Why this indignity? I am a lord of the Ottoman Empire—a pasha of the sultan."

"Were you the sultan himself you should die for the crimes you have committed. Zuleikah, come here—there, stand so that he can see your face. Pasha, do you know this maiden?"

"I do. She was an inmate of my harem, and destined for the honor of becoming my favorite," haughtily replied the Turk.

"This maiden you tore from her home. Her mother fell by the hands of your soldiers; her brother, a mere boy, was murdered when unarmed; for this you shall die."

"It was the fortune of war that made me the victor. To the victor belong the spoils," insolently replied the Turk.

"Kaloolah, come hither. Pasha, do you know this maiden?" and Julian glanced upon the young girl, whose face was pale but stern and determined. At length she stood face to face with the slayer of her father.

"Yes; she, too, was in my harem as her mother was there before her."

"Where is that mother now—she whom you took from a devoted husband, from a baby daughter?"

"At the bottom of the sea! How do I know what becomes of favorites who have lost favor in my sight?"

"And the father—the gallant Cretan, El Estin—where is he?"

"Ask yonder ruin; it may tell the secret!"

"No, no, Turk! Here is one to tell the secret."

All started at the strange voice, and suddenly the mysterious, white-clad woman glided before the Moslem chief.

"Holy Mahomet! *Alfarida!* Does the sea give up its dead?"

"Ha, ha, ha, Al Sirat—I am she who was once thy favorite, who ruled you by love's fetters—now, I am the being who has haunted yonder ruin for these long years. You tired of me because the fair Greek, Photine, crossed your path—you tired of me, and sent me forth one night on the Bosphorus to die; but he whom you made executioner was merciful—he spared me, and I came hither—came hither with the twin deformities you also sentenced to death, because their hideousness offended your handsome dark eyes—to this isle we came, and in yonder ruin, near my girlhood's home, have we

Hved—lived as the phantoms of an old crumbling temple.

"Ay, there I lived, and night after night, when the moon shone brightly, did my poor, forsaken husband come thither and commune with his sorrows. Often could I have touched him; but I would not—no, I was a poor, polluted thing—polluted by thy touch.

"But one night he came, and on the very spot where he had met you years before he met you again—met you, and your golden scimitar drank his life's blood.

"Ah, yes, I know all, for I heard his dying words to his daughter—my daughter. You were his murderer—and now you must die by my hand."

The woman, wild in her frenzy, sprung forward, a jeweled dirk in her uplifted hand.

But a slender form glided before her—a gentle yet firm grasp withheld her, and the soft voice of Kaloolah said:

"No—you have sinned enough; do not let a human life be on your soul."

The dirk fell to the deck, and stuck quivering in the boards, while the arms dropped, and the white, haggard, thin, yet still beautiful face turned upon Kaloolah, and the lips parted, while she breathed forth:

"My daughter—will you touch your guilty mother?"

"Mother, I forgive you all, even as my father forgave me."

With a cry of joy, a heart pent up for years in agony bursting forth in delirious delight, Alfarida threw out her arms, and the lone mother and forgiving daughter were clasped in a long embrace.

No word was said for full a minute—no one, not even Al Sirat, dare break the sacredness of that meeting with speech.

At length Kaloolah said, softly:

"My father, what of him, mother?"

"He lies buried yonder—I was jealous of his body, fearful that it would be buried far away, where I dare not go, and I called my slave and we bore it away. Alas! that was a night of horror, for my faithful slave, Sudka, the twin of yonder poor creature, was slain—and we stole him away, too, and gave him burial near your father, for I dare not now call him husband."

Kaloolah gave a deep sigh; the mystery of her father's body being spirited away was solved—her mother had given him burial, and tears had been shed over his lonely grave.

"Al Sirat, do you dare ask for mercy now?" broke in the stern voice of Julian, while he and all seemed relieved, for the mystery of the old ruin was solved—its phantoms were flesh and blood.

"I ask for no mercy. If I must die, so be it. I will die as I have lived, fearless."

The pluck of the man won a murmur of admiration from all who heard him, while Julian continued:

"You are a brave man, though an evil one, pasha. When the moon rises from yonder sea you shall die."

"So be it—I am ready."

"But not alone: here stands a man equally deserving of death, and he shall bear you company."

It was Paul Malvern who spoke, and he pointed toward the Turkish *aide-de-camp*, he whom he had called Archer Trevillian.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A LEAF FROM THE PAST.

WHILE the exciting incidents were occurring on the deck of the Silver Scimitar, the vessel was lying to, calmly rocking upon the swell of the sea.

Upon the waters swept a gentle breeze, and the sun, near its setting, cast in deep shadow the shores, and burnished brightly the grand old ruin on the cliff.

On the vessel all were calm outwardly, yet every heart throbbed wildly, even those of the surprised seamen, who gathered in groups, gazing upon the scene.

Presently Paul Malvern said, in deep, earnest tones that proved that he was greatly moved:

"I have said that this man, Archer Trevillian, should die also. I will unfold to you all a leaf from the past, and then see if there is one present who will not say that he richly merits death.

"Like myself, he is an American, and like myself he is now an officer in a foreign service. The circumstances which brought this strange coincidence about are widely different.

"In a Southern State I was born and reared—my parents being wealthy and of good family.

"My sister and myself, she three years my junior, were the only children, and when we were grown to manhood and womanhood, my parents were killed by a railroad accident, and, to my surprise, my father's will, found in his desk, made me heir to all his estates, my sister being simply left to my guardianship, and in case of my death to inherit my wealth.

It was a strange will, and created much talk among the friends of our family; but it stood good and I got the wealth, at the same time declaring my intention to share it equally with my sister.

"As I was absent at college until my nine-

teenth year, and then, on the breaking out of the civil war, went into the Confederate army, my father had as his secretary a young man who had been educated to the profession of the law; that man stands before you in Archer Trevillian.

"After the death of my parents, I still kept this man as manager of the estates, for he knew what I was worth far better than I did.

"At the close of the war I returned to my home, which had escaped destruction, and then I met a young lady in whom I became deeply interested—nay, I learned to love, and believed that she loved me, until one evening I discovered that she was secretly engaged to a young man, one whom I had never liked.

"This was an unfortunate discovery for me, at that time, as, he having before told me he was not interested in the lady, rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, I accused him of deception in the matter, and the result was a challenge from him to meet me in the *duello*, which challenge I accepted.

"At that time we were rehearsing for some private theatricals, gotten up by the ladies of the neighborhood, in behalf of the wounded Confederate soldiers, and they were to come off the very night following the acceptance of the challenge, and it was agreed we would keep the matter quiet, as both my antagonist and myself were important actors in the play—nay, stranger still, we were the principals in a dueling scene that was in the piece—certainly a strange coincidence.

"To hasten on: the play was well put on, the stage, and the dueling scene came, and with bitterness in our hearts, we took our stands—for we felt that the morrow would usher in a *real*, not a *sham* duel between us.

"The word was given to fire, and our pistols flashed together, and, as was his place to do in the play, my antagonist fell to the floor, his part being to be mortally wounded.

"Then we all waited for him to raise himself on his arm, as the character called for, and address some dying words to me.

"We waited long and he never moved, and at length one of the acting seconds stepped forward to prompt him, thinking he had forgotten his lines.

"With horror he started back; my enemy was *dead*—shot through the head by a ball from my pistol.

"I will pass over the scene that followed: it begs description.

"I was arrested; the truth of the intended duel came out, and it was believed that I had purposely loaded my pistol, to save my own life on the morrow.

"I lay in a felon's cell for months, and then was brought to trial—a long, tedious trial, which resulted in my being found guilty of murder with intent to kill, and my sentence was death by hanging.

"The night before the day on which I was to be executed a visitor came to my cell. It was my sister, and she came to save me, for she had bribed the jailer to let me escape.

"The jailer was a young man, unmarried, and one to whom I had rendered favors, and it was decided that we should fly together.

"Conscious of my own innocence, I fled from the ignominious death that threatened me—fled to a foreign land.

"Shortly after my departure Archer Trevillian, who still managed my property, made a discovery—in a secret drawer of my father's desk was found *another will*; this will was written after the one I had found, and divided the property equally between myself and sister, and in case of my death my share was to revert to her, *vice versa* as regarded her half if she died.

"Then it was shown that I had forged the first will, for in *my handwriting*, several half-completed copies of the will in my favor were found among my private papers.

"A year after my flight Archer Trevillian married my sister, and became the lord of my home and estates, and from that day the remittances sent me abroad ceased; but I had sufficient to allow me to travel about, and fond of Eastern lands, I passed much time in Greece, Turkey and Asia.

"One night in Athens, I was set upon by an assassin, and he came nigh taking my life, for he gave me a deep wound in the side. In that assassin I beheld a man strangely like Archer Trevillian; yet I did not *suspect him*, for what could he be doing in Greece?

"After a long illness I recovered, and drifted into Turkey once more; but my letters home were unanswered, and I gradually went downhill until I was almost starved. Nay, one night, driven to desperation by my ill-fortune, I would have taken my own life, had I not been called from the dark deed by hearing a combat with scimitars waging not far away.

"Then I first met Delos Bey, and he it was who has saved me from myself. What I am today, I owe to him.

"But, enough of self. Let me now tell you of the career of this man," and Paul Malvern pointed contemptuously toward Archer Trevillian, who stood with bowed head and white face, his manacled hands clasped, his whole attitude that of one who held no hope in life.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A DASTARD CAREER.

AFTER a moment's silence, Paul Malvern continued his story, to which all, not excepting Al Sirat Pasha, had listened with breathless interest, for he spoke in the Greek tongue.

"When last at Constantinople I wrote once more to my sister, begging that I might hear from her, for I knew nothing of what had happened at home—not even of her marriage to Archer Trevillian.

"The last batch of dispatches, received through Greece, brought me a number of letters from friends—who had seen my name mentioned as a Cretan Bey, for you know the English papers and the New York *Herald* have been most complimentary over any services that I may have rendered poor Crete.

"One of those letters I will give you the contents of, for it is nearly similar to the news contained in the others.

"It told me that I was no longer considered *intentionally* guilty of having slain my rival, on that memorable night, for strange disclosures had recently been made, and my lawyer, for the letter was from my father's legal adviser, had endeavored to find my whereabouts, although I was reported dead—a notice to that effect having been copied from an Athens journal—it stating that I was killed by the hand of a robber.

"Still I was advertised for, and then discovered through my services in Crete having been mentioned by newspaper correspondents.

"Of the disclosures made to me, I was informed of my sister's marriage to Archer Trevillian, and I remembered at just that date my remittances from home stopped.

"On their wedding tour the couple had visited Europe, and my sister had stated on her return that they had remained two days in Athens, after traveling for months over Eastern lands.

"The time of their stay in Athens, and the time of my attempted assassination *were identical*; need I say more on this point?

"When my death was believed, my share of the fortune left by my parents, was given over to my sister, and Archer Trevillian then became master over all.

"So great was his influence over his wife, that she made her will, giving her husband all her property, in case of her death, for she was childless.

"At length my sister died suddenly—in fact, under such suspicious circumstances, that it turned attention upon Archer Trevillian as her murderer.

"Finding he was suspected he fled from the country, carrying with him a large sum of money he had in his keeping.

"A *post-mortem* examination revealed the fact that my sister *had* died from poison, and a druggist stated he had sold such poison to Archer Trevillian—nay, a vial, half-filled with the deadly liquid, was found in his private desk.

"His motive for this deed was found to be twofold—to get all the property by her death, for he was heir, and to marry a woman to whom he had been engaged for years—for that woman fled from the country with him, though, at the time, she did not know the enormity of his crimes.

"Among his private effects were also found different copies of the last will, purporting to be that of my father, and also scribbling in imitation of *my handwriting*, my father's and my sister's.

"And, more important still, a will, an exact copy of the one I had found, only it was not signed, and having been blurred and blotted was not used; to this copy was a *codicil*, which instructed me to invest certain cash left me, in my sister's name, that she might have a regular and large income, and in case of her marrying, her wedding present was to be fifty thousand dollars in cash.

"This explained my father's seeming neglect of my sister, and a close search among the papers of my deceased parent found the *codicil signed*, of which the other was a copy, like the blotted will.

"Also, in a vest pocket, a garment that had been worn the night of the fatal theatricals, by Archer Trevillian, were found several bullets—the exact size and kind as the one taken from the man whom I had shot down.

"Thus did circumstantial and real evidence serve to criminate Archer Trevillian, and clear my name of dishonor.

"And, once on his track, my lawyer trailed him to Europe, where he found he had lived in luxury as long as his money lasted, and then cruelly deserted the woman who had, loving him as she did, followed his evil fortunes.

"Deserted by the scoundrel, she was thrown upon the town in a European city, and became a degraded being, who ended her own life shortly after she had made known to the detective the story of her wrongs.

"There all pursuit of Archer Trevillian ended. No clew could be found to his whereabouts, and it was at last believed he was dead; but he lives for me to see him die.

"Thank God that fate led him into the Turkish service, for by that means I at length stand

face to face with the man who caused my hand to take life, and very nearly my death upon the gallows—the man who murdered my poor sister, whose only wrong was in loving him, who tracked me to Europe to assassinate her brother.

"You know now, my friends, the story of my life and that of Archer Trevillian. Does he merit death?"

There was a cry from every lip—seamen and all:

"He does!"

And even Al Sirat shrunk from him. The pasha was a cruel soldier, heartless as regarded women, but his heart was not as black, Turk that he was, as that of the renegade American.

"He deserves death, and he shall die. Signor Taras, prepare for the execution of those two men," and Julian Delos led Kaloolah and Zuleikah into the cabin.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SECRET OF THE SIGNET RING.

SLOWLY the moon, on its wane, arose above the sea, and its light fell full upon the face of those who stood upon the yacht's deck.

Calm, emotionless was the face of Al Sirat Pasha. He was to die, and his faith would not let him bemoan his fate.

He had shrugged his shoulders—muttered *Inshallah!* and with the calmness of a fatalist, resigned himself to indifference.

"What is to be, will be—so be it," he murmured, complacently, and then turned to the apparent enjoyment of the moonlit sea, the silver-gilded waters that danced by the yacht.

Archer Trevillian was different. He had cast aside his creed for that of the Mahomedan, but it did not give him that calm indifference to death felt by the Turk, and cowering, trembling, pallid as a corpse, he leant over the bulwarks, his eyes peering down into the dark waters, as though he would see how deep his body would sink when his soul had taken its flight.

In listless attitudes the seamen stood about the deck, ten of them leaning upon carbines, for they had been detailed as executioners.

Presently two forms came on deck—Paul Malvern and Julian Delos.

Their faces were sad, yet stern, and very white—their words low and earnest.

"Signor, in the early part of the Cretan struggle, you appeared before me, wearing the secret signet ring of the Sultan?" and Al Sirat Pasha turned to Paul, who replied:

"Yes, I wear it yet," and he held forth his finger, and the seal glittered in the moonlight.

"When I learned afterward that you and Delos Bey, the Cretan conspirator, had taken sides against his majesty, I believed that you had both deceived his trust in you. Am I wrong?"

"No, pasha. His majesty never placed a trust in me," replied Paul.

"Can I ask, then, how you obtained that signet?"

"I will tell you with pleasure.

"Once, when travelling through the mountains of Servia, near the village of Izverlik, I rescued from death a Turkish traveler—as I then believed, a merchant.

"He was a very young and handsome man, elegantly attired, and was traveling on horseback with two followers, when they were attacked by a band of Servian bandits, and ere they could offer resistance, the three were prisoners."

"The two servants, as I supposed them to be, were then cruelly put to death, and the bandits were preparing to rob the Turkish gentleman, and then to take his life, as they had done with his followers, when I rode upon the scene, unperceived by the party.

"I had with me my pet revolvers, and drawing one in each hand, I charged into their midst and rescued the Turk, who, mounting his steed, quickly dashed off by my side, and thus escaped.

"That night we rested at the village of Izverlik, and in the morning the host of the khan where we stopped brought me a package, saying that my friend had departed and left that with him for me.

"I opened it, and beheld this ring, and a scrap of paper containing these words:

"You have saved the life of one who will never forget you. Should adversity overtake you, come to Constantinople and present this ring to

"MAHMOUD."

"The ring I never parted with, and though in great distress in Constantinople, it never occurred to me to seek the one who gave it to me."

"Do you know who Mahmoud is?" asked Al Sirat, quietly.

"I do not. Doubtless some noble, as he held the ring of the sultan."

"I hold its mate. See, it is on my finger, and I beg you to let it go down with me to my deep-sea grave."

"I will do so; but do you know Mahmoud?"

"Yes—or rather no; yet I know who he is—"

"And will tell me?"

"Yes; he is the son of the sultan. He was traveling incognito, as he has often done through

the empire. You did him a great service. Such a service to the sultan gained me my ring; an assassin struck at his life—I was unarmed, but threw myself forward and received the poniard in my breast.

"When I recovered, his majesty gave me the ring. There is a third one like it—the sultan wears that on his own finger. But your story has delayed the execution—see! the moon is far from the horizon," and Al Sirat Pasha pointed to the silvery orb, sailing calmly up into the sky, a crescent barque upon a waveless sea.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE EXECUTION.

PAUL started, as the Turk, with utmost *sang froid*, reminded him that his prisoner was doomed to death, and the American could not withhold his admiration of the man who could so fearlessly face his fate.

Turning to Julian Delos the two conversed together for a few moments in a low tone, and then the young Cretan said calmly:

"The hour of your execution is at hand, pasha; have you aught to make known ere you die?"

"No; I have always lived prepared for death. Should it ever be asked how died Al Sirat Pasha, say that he died as he lived—fearlessly.

"I am ready," and the Turk calmly folded his chained arms upon his breast, and stood silently awaiting.

"And you, sir? have you aught to say?" and Julian turned toward Archer Trevillian.

"Mercy! oh, mercy! I am not fit to die! Let me live that I may repent!" groaned the cowering man.

"No mercy need you expect. Signor Taros, is all in readiness for the execution?"

"Yes, signor; the guard is here."

"It is well. Pasha, you are an intrepid man, and you shall not die in irons. Signor Stellos, remove those manacles from the wrists of his lordship."

The lieutenant quickly obeyed, and then Taros led the two men to the spot where they were to stand—a raised scaffold upon the fore-castle of the yacht.

Al Sirat Pasha mounted the rude platform with calm dignity, and faced his executioners with intrepid mien, his order-bespangled breast sparkling in the rays of the moon.

Archer Trevillian was aided upon the dais, his tottering limbs scarcely able to support him, his quivering, ashen lips muttering prayers to that Savior whom he had renounced for the Allah of the Mahomedan.

As they stood thus, a white-robed form glided from the cabin companionway. It was Alfarida, who, stealing into the shadow of the mainmast, stood silently, almost greedily, watching the tall form of Al Sirat Pasha.

With a wave of his hand Julian Delos motioned to the guard to be in readiness; but, as they shouldered arms, the form of Archer Trevillian sunk heavily upon the platform.

Instantly Taros sprang forward to raise him up—believing he had swooned; but he started back; the renegade American was dead! Fear had killed him!

A scornful smile swept over the face of the Turk, and he motioned his hand to the guard.

Instantly the carbines were leveled—there was a short sight, a stern order, a flash, a combined report, and Al Sirat Pasha was no more.

CONCLUSION.

UPON the shores of the Atlantic, and in a Southern State, dwell an aristocratic and wealthy community, living in homes their forefathers had built a century before them.

A few months after the scene that closes the last chapter, the neighborhood of which I write was thrown into considerable excitement by the arrival of an agent, who purchased two of the most lordly homesteads in the vicinity, and in fitting them up neither trouble nor expense were spared.

The grounds of the two mansions adjoined, and sloped down to the water's edge—a small cove or inlet of the Atlantic.

Who were to live in these elegant homes none knew, and the gossips were on the tiptoe of expectation regarding the new arrivals.

One pleasant afternoon, a year after the end of the Cretan Revolution of 1869, a large, graceful yacht, flying the English colors, stood into the little cove and came to anchor, a short distance from the shore.

A cutter immediately rowed shoreward, and a party of five whites and three blacks sprung out on the pier, and proceeded toward the nearest mansion, where a troop of servants greeted them.

The following day rumor had it that an English nobleman and his beautiful bride, her mother, and a deformed and hideous negro occupied one of the homesteads, and that an American gentleman, his wife, a large African, and an old negress were the occupants of the other homestead.

Is it necessary to inform the reader that those whose career he has so patiently followed through the thrilling and bloody scenes of the Turco-Cretan war are the dwellers in those lordly homes by the Atlantic?

No; for he has already guessed how the Silver Scimitar sailed to England, where Julius Delos and Kaloolah, and Paul Malvern and Zuleikah, were bound in the holy bands of wedlock, and then, in the free land of America, sought new homes and new associations, far from the war-ravished isle of Crete, in whose mountain hamlets strange stories are nightly told of Delos Bey, the brave Cretan conspirator, and Malvern Bey, the daring American, who yet wears the sultan's secret signet.

THE END.

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